

THE DYNAMICS OF CONFESSION:  
A THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

by  
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## DISSERTATION

### THE DYNAMICS OF CONFESSION: A THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

This study investigates the concept of confession, endeavoring to ascertain its contemporary significance for the disciplines of theology and psychology. It seeks to understand the motivational dynamics of confession, with attention directed towards determining under what circumstances confession might be said to be efficacious in the sense of being redemptive (theological) and/or therapeutic (psychological).

The significance of confession for theology is rooted in the doctrine of sin. The Bible describes sin in terms of word-pictures such as "missing the mark" and "falling short of the goal," with the result that the covenant relationship between God and man is violated. In the dynamic sense, sin is understood as referring not to morality alone, but rather, as encompassing anything which comes between God and man so as to rupture their relationship of love. The confession of sin is the pathway to divine reconciliation and restoration. The theological doctrine of forgiveness indicates that God's acceptance is occasioned not by any merit or works on man's part, but solely by virtue of God's grace through Jesus Christ. As man confesses his sin in the process of the Christian life of repentance he begins to experience the true fulfillment of forgiveness. Within the framework of *Seelsorge* in Reformation thought confession was advised, rather than legislated, by Luther, Calvin, and Wesley, and is regarded a valuable aspect of contemporary pastoral counseling.

The significance of confession for psychology finds clearest meaning in relation to the concept of guilt. Basic to this consideration is man's conscience, understood as the internalization of specific ideas of right and wrong, with accompanying moral values, as presented by the significant authority figures of one's formative years. Harmful guilt feelings may arise when the content of conscience is violated, whether by thought, word, or deed. Through its therapeutic endeavors psychology discovered that guilt could be relieved through confession. Freud early utilized hypnosis to evoke confession, describing it as the "cathartic method," and believing that its efficacy rested on the mental and emotional purging of the patient in treatment. He later held that all neurotic conflict stems from repression, and so directed his psychoanalysis towards making conscious the unconscious. Jung deviated significantly from Freud, but also saw great value in confession, especially insofar as it enabled man to become aware of the "shadow" side of his personality. Rogers stresses the cathartic effect of confession in releasing expression. He is convinced that if negative feelings are uninhibited and discharged, positive feelings will follow, leading towards increased self-regard and insight in problem-solving.

The findings of this study may be summarized as follows: the disciplines of theology and psychology are independent sciences, each making use of its own particular categories. Each science is valid in its own concern, yet the two are of distinctive frames of orientation, and so are not comparable feature

for feature. Together they complement each other in more clearly verifying the richness of human experience. The experience of confession is common to theology and psychology, and there is considerable dynamic overlapping. However, the fact of God being the ultimate object of theological confession results in such unburdening being qualitatively different from psychological confession alone, as the transcendent relationship experienced by man in relationship with God is unique. In the sphere of theology man is estranged from his covenant relationship with God due to sin, understood as consisting of that which separates. Through confession he seeks divine acceptance and forgiveness in the process of the creature humbling his ego-centered pride before the Creator. In the context of psychology, man is emotionally disturbed because of being out of relationship with different dimensions of his own psychic apparatus. Through confession he is enabled to experience the catharsis which hopefully frees him from the distortions of conscience, fears, and anxieties, and so may move towards increased self-acceptance. Accordingly, psychological confession may well be necessary to prepare the way for the larger context of theological confession. Finally, confession is efficacious in the sense of being therapeutic only when its dynamics reveal man's basic attitudes and uncover his deepest motives, so as to free him from inner conflict. It is efficacious in the sense of being redemptive only when man acknowledges his sin as resulting from his personal responsibility and can truly realize God's forgiveness by virtue of accepting the fact that he has truly been accepted by God into divine relationship even though humanly unacceptable.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE NATURE OF CONFESSION

#### Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The twentieth century has ushered in the most universally felt era of tension in the history of mankind. Not only do belligerent nations face the daily possibility of mutual destruction, but the nuclear fallout resulting from hydrogen bomb hostility between any few of the world's powers would have devastating effect upon the rest of humanity as well. The actual horrors which would ensue from open combat stagger the world's imagination and evoke such a sense of dread that Paul Tillich rightly describes our situation when he states: "Today it has become almost a truism to call our time an 'age of anxiety.'"<sup>1</sup>

The anguish of the world's governments reflects the collective fears felt by the singular peoples which comprise those governments. Individual men and women are experiencing unprecedented pressures in merely endeavoring to carry out the unheroic routines of daily living. And none of us is exempted. Rather, each of us bears the burden of mounting vulnerability as occasioned by the world's

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 35.

unrest. The dangers of this vulnerability are many, but the greatest threat to our social well-being lies in the possible rupture of those vital relationships with both God and man which offer essential meaning to our lives.

Man is a social being and the significance of meaningful relationships has never been denied. The inter-relatedness of persons was noted long before John Donne penned "No man is an island." But the really crucial value of relationships for healthy living has not been precisely acknowledged and spelled out until relatively recent times.<sup>1</sup> It is now realized that not only is a study of relationships considered to be helpful, but, rather it is essential for a depth understanding of human behavior. This is true whether the object of concern be the individual, the group, or even mankind as a whole. But irrespective of where the eventual focus might be placed, such a study rightly originates with the single individual, for he is the subject of all ensuing object relationships. As Lewis J. Sherrill explains the situation: "The self is formed in its relationships with

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<sup>1</sup>Some sources which are used extensively in this School of Theology are: Andras Angyal, Foundations for a Science of Personality (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1941), A. H. Maslow and Bela Mittelmann, Principles of Abnormal Psychology (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), Robert Benjamin Welk, "A Critical Comparison of John Wesley's Doctrine of Original Sin with Andras Angyal's Concept of the 'Trend toward Autonomy'" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Southern California, 1959), along with a two-semester project for students, "Personal Growth through Group Interaction."

others. If it becomes de-formed, it becomes so in its relationships. If it is re-formed, or trans-formed, that too will be in its relationships."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the formative power of relationships upon individual personality is great. But today, in our space-age culture, the situation is especially precarious, as relationships themselves are in jeopardy. The uncertainties of the future are so extreme that "existential anxiety" is universally experienced.<sup>2</sup> Because of this anxiety we are often in such individual despair that the foundation stones of our relationships tremble. In our quivering we find it difficult to express ourselves accurately, with the result that communication is impaired. Feeling cut off, we become frightened, which, in turn, causes us to retreat further into loneliness.

In our lonely state we may become blocked and then crippled, so that our creativity, productivity, and effectiveness flounder in frustration and exhaustion, even to the standstill of mental breakdown. We groan for understanding, being terrified of rejection and isolation, yet not knowing how to purposefully express our feelings. On the

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis J. Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Tillich, op. cit., p. 41. "Anxiety is existential in the sense that it belongs to existence, as such, and not to an abnormal state of mind as in neurotic (and psychotic) anxiety."

deepest level we crave acceptance, both from others and from ourselves, desperately seeking that which will give authentic meaning to our existence.

The road towards authentic meaning is set upon by each of us when we begin the process of unburdening ourselves of the weights which have so shackled our lives. With the first murmurs of confession we feel the grip of loneliness losing its vice-like hold. Our confidence increases as we realize that we are rising from the "Slough of Despond" of our individual lives and are beginning vital communication. The confession quickens, and fear is in retreat, opening the way for a wondrous sense of liberation. This new freedom breaks through our solitary darkness into the light of community. We begin to feel both accepted, and accepting, and so are freed to be genuine selves. In short, through confession we are released from the Hell of solitary confinement and are restored to life-giving relationships with both God and man.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is fivefold:

1. To investigate the concept of confession as a general theory, based upon its nature as rooted in its religious and psychotherapeutic foundations. (Chapter I).
2. To ascertain the contemporary significance of confession for the disciplines of theology and psychology. (Chapters II and III).
3. To consider and determine just what takes place

within the experience of confession itself, focusing upon its "dynamics," which term is understood to mean "the motivations or the mechanisms postulated as determining behavior."<sup>1</sup> (Chapter IV).

4. To evaluate, critically, the implications of confession, with specific attention directed to determining under what conditions or circumstances confession might be said to be efficacious in the senses of being redemptive (theological) and/or therapeutic (psychological). (Chapter V).

5. To set forth suggestions and considerations for possible future investigations in the area of confession. (Chapter V).

The basic method of research employed is exploratory and critical. This requires an investigation and analysis of literature relevant to the accomplishment of the above-stated purposes and the utilization of empirical material when appropriate. It is felt that the relatively unorganized nature of the material under investigation, including theory, will result in this study being largely preliminary in nature. At the same time the study is considered significant in that

theory is often too general or too specific to provide clear guidance for empirical research. In these

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<sup>1</sup>Horace B. English and Ava Chapney English, A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytic Terms (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), p. 166.



circumstances, exploratory research is necessary to obtain the experience which will be helpful in formulating relevant hypotheses for more definitive investigation.<sup>1</sup>

It is acknowledged that some investigation has previously been made in areas related to this study, and such extant work is duly recognized.<sup>2</sup>

### Religious Foundations

Confession has always been an important factor in healing ills both of the body and the mind. The accounts of man's experience in confession form a long and colorful record. Leslie D. Weatherhead declares:

The practice of confession goes back to the earliest history of man. As soon as man chose evil instead of good, and chose it recognizing it as evil, he concealed his act from others, and sought to banish it from his own consciousness. He had a "guilty secret." As soon as he did that, he started the dreary story of the poisoned unconscious. He "fell." All the initiation and mystery cults of the ancient world call on him in their ceremonies to "confess" so that he may ease his conscience and get rid of the poison before it poisons the deep mind.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, the religious foundations of confession are

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<sup>1</sup>Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations, Part I (New York: The Dryden Press, 1951), p.33.

<sup>2</sup>For instance, see Manning Eugene Van Nostrand, Jr., "Psychotherapeutic Values in the Confessional and in Pastoral Counseling" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1949).

<sup>3</sup>Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p. 445.

very ancient.<sup>1</sup> This early activity may not have been known as "confession" but is closely related. For instance, as Charles F. Kemp comments: "In ancient Babylon there were officials who conducted both public and private penance, using manuals similar to those later used as Christian manuals of confession."<sup>2</sup>

In this early confession, as in all confession, much of man's motivation stems from the loneliness of his estrangement. He feels threatened and cut off, and so seeks positive relationships. In illustration, Will Durant cites one anxious man's plea for approval and acceptance in a "negative confession" from the literature of earliest Egypt, which must surely be one of the oldest confessional documents known to civilization:

Hail to Thee, Great God, Lord of Truth and Justice! I have come before Thee, my Master. . . . I bring unto you Truth. . . . I have not committed iniquity against men. I have not oppressed the poor. . . . I have not laid labor upon any free man beyond that which he wrought for himself. . . . I have not defaulted, I have not committed that which is an abomination to the Gods. I have not caused the slave to be ill-treated of his master. I have not starved any man, I have not made any to weep, I have not assassinated any man. . . . I have not committed treason against any. I have not in aught diminished the supplies of the temple; I have not spoiled the show-bred of the gods. . . . I have done no carnal act within the sacred enclosure of the temple.

<sup>1</sup>For the place of confession and primitive initiation rites in earliest mystery religions, see Harold R. Willoughby, Pagan Regeneration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929).

<sup>2</sup>Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), p. 3.

I have not blasphemed. . . . I have not falsified the balance. I have not taken away milk from the mouths of sucklings. I have . . . not taken with nets the birds of the gods. . . . I am pure . . . I am pure . . . I am pure.<sup>1</sup>

In noting the urgency of the above "confession," it is necessary to endeavor to understand the felt need of the impassioned Egyptian believer who strives so fervently to proclaim his purity before his god. Whether or not the guiltless petitions he advances be true, the strong thirst for acceptance which lies behind them and the self-conscious stirrings which have moved powerfully to bring them into vivid declaration must be acknowledged. For it is assumed that this anonymous Egyptian was not alone but, rather, spoke on behalf of every man of his day. And the dangers of separation and loneliness which he suggests are likewise born out of similar feelings of the need for acceptance of every man, both then and now. So, whence came the awareness of estrangement which lies behind this confession?

Christianity has explained this awareness as stemming from the mythical account of Adam and Eve's behavior in the Garden of Eden, when they set themselves up against God by giving in to the ego-appealing taunts of the tempter. When Adam and Eve defied God's injunction ". . . of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not

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<sup>1</sup>Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), pp. 203f.

eat . . ." (Genesis 2:17) by partaking of that which was prohibited, "the eyes of both were opened" (Genesis 3:7).<sup>1</sup> This eye-opening experience was climaxed by the personal awakening to their naked finiteness, of which they had previously been unashamed (Genesis 2:25). Their new awareness, however, evidently now evoked feelings of exposure, so that they now felt it necessary to cover their bodies from each other, from God, and from the world.

The transgression of God's instructions to them evidently was also the occasion for the birth of conscience in Adam and Eve. For, having disobeyed God, their awareness of their disobedience was not lightly forgotten or self-excused. Rather, the implications of their actions stayed with them so that their basic relationship towards God was now changed. Hearing God walking in the garden, Adam and Eve now feel such self-conscious fear that they are driven to hide from him. When God seeks them out and inquires concerning the cause of their mysterious behavior, Adam and Eve reply with the first confessions recorded in the Bible (Genesis 3:12; 13).

Like many embarrassed confessions, the early words of these primal people contain an essential kernel of truth, yet are slanted to mitigate the personal responsibility of the speakers. Both Adam and Eve endeavor to pass

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<sup>1</sup>All Bible quotations in this study are from The Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

off the actual blame. Adam claims he ate the forbidden fruit only because he was enticed by Eve, whom, after all, God himself had originally given to him. Herein is the implied suggestion that it is really God's own fault that the whole thing happened. So how can Adam be blamed? Eve, then, follows Adam's lead and admits that she also ate the fruit, but only because the serpent "beguiled" her. Hence, Eve conveniently fails to recall her own earlier covetousness, as when she "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6).

This last point--the fact that "the tree was to be desired to make one wise"--is of primary significance. The rupture of the erstwhile firm relationship between the two people and God seems to stem from the motive "to be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Accordingly, Eve's temptation was, to some degree, a power struggle in the relationship with God. And, in accepting the fruit, she was willingly placing herself in opposition to God, with Adam subsequently joining forces with her. Having actually asserted themselves, however, Adam and Eve discovered what it means to leap into the unknown: their "eyes" were opened to their situation, and their loneliness was exposed in their nakedness. They felt utterly cut off from God, which was far more than they had originally anticipated in their exploration to be self-sufficient.

Accordingly, their respective confessions, faltering and alibi-laden as they are, represent man's earliest attempts to rectify his mistakes. In their newly discovered self-awareness, Adam and Eve now have sensitive super-egos to maintain, so their excuses to God are needed defense mechanisms. They cannot afford the danger of themselves accepting complete responsibility for their behavior, so they begin the now-ancient practice of evasion. The purpose of their confessions, however, is the purpose of all confessions: to be restored from loneliness to security, and to be accepted, through reconciliation, into relationship.

Throughout the entire Old Testament the people of God, the Israelites, were conscious of being in relationship with God. This relationship was not something which the people themselves had brought into existence, but, rather, God had taken the initiative, and in this fact the Israelites gloried. Indeed, this God-instigated relationship was what made the Hebrews unique among all peoples of the earth, even though they could not express the reason for God's selection. As G. Ernest Wright puts it:

Israel's greatness lay in what to the nation was a simple fact, that God had chosen her: and God's choice rested in his own mysterious grace. That grace could not and would not be explained; it could only be inferred and accepted in faith and in gratitude.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. 50.

This relationship between God and his chosen people took the form of a covenant agreement.<sup>1</sup> John Bright explains this covenant in that:

While it could not be called a bargain--it was not between equals--it nevertheless partook of the nature of a bargain in that it was a bilateral compact. God would give Israel a destiny as his people, would defend and establish her, but only so long as she obeyed him. The covenant laid heavy demands on Israel. Specifically it demanded HESED, a grateful and complete loyalty to the God of the covenant to the exclusion of all other gods. Equally, it demanded strict obedience to the laws of the covenant in all human relationships within the covenant brotherhood. . . . But at the same time this covenant-people idea imparted to Israel a tremendous sense of destiny and a confidence that would not down.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, this covenant agreement involved two-way obligations, based upon the personal relationship sought by God: "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:12).

Specific instances of the actual working out of this covenant relationship in illustrating God's dealing

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<sup>1</sup>John Bright states in his book, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953) p. 27, fn., that: "The covenant idea is so important that W. Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (3rd ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1948), has reconstructed the entire Old Testament theology around it. The writer is in fundamental agreement. It is true that the word 'covenant' is rarely used in the earliest sources, but the idea is larger than the word. It is linked with Israel's whole notion of election and with the very structure of the tribal league." Also, see Rudolf Bultmann, "The Divine Covenant," in Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 35-42, and Allen O. Miller, "Covenant," in A Handbook of Christian Theology (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>Bright, op. cit., p. 29.

with man may be cited in that:

He made a promise of continued life and favor to man on condition of obedience, coupled with a penalty for disobedience (Genesis 2:16, 17). He established a covenant with Noah, that Noah should be saved when the old world perished (Genesis 6:18), and that there should be no other great deluge, the rainbow being the token of the covenant (Genesis 9:12, 15, 16); with Abraham and his posterity, of which circumcision was to be the sign, to be their God and to give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance (Genesis 13:17; 15:18; 17:2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 14, 19; II Kings 13:23; I Chronicles 16:15-18; Psalms 105:9-11; Acts 7:8; Romans 4:13, 17); with the Israelites as a nation, to continue to be their God and to grant national protection, of which a sign was to be the Sabbath (Exodus 31:16) and the keeping of the 10 commandments its condition (Deuteronomy 4:13, 23).<sup>1</sup>

This covenant, or testimony of the relationship between God and his chosen people is summarized in the Book of the Covenant, or Law of Moses (Exodus 20:22-23:33), and even more briefly in the ten commandments themselves (Exodus 21:1-17). Yet at the same time, as Randolph Crump Miller observes:

It is a distortion of the covenant to reduce it to the Ten Commandments. This code is a helpful summary of the Law, and when limited to its primitive meaning it fails to do justice to the revelation that took place. While the covenant at times is interpreted in purely moral or ceremonial terms, and while moral and ceremonial obedience are involved in man's response to the covenant, it strikes a deeper note. When we see the full meaning of this agreement between God and man, we discover that God is acting in terms of grace and on his side offers freely to his chosen people to be their God. Because

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<sup>1</sup>John D. Davis and Henry Snyder Gehman, "Covenant," in The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1944), p. 118.



he is their God, he has a claim on them, the claim of love.<sup>1</sup>

And it is this "claim of love" which causes ruptures in the relationship between God and man to be sharply experienced on the emotional level. For then, when the self-conscious man realizes his estranged and damaged condition, the need is urgent for the experience of confession, aiming for reconciliation, which is a primary motif of the Old Testament. Consequently, while the ten commandments and the Law of Moses seem to be dealing essentially with morality, "the great sin is not the limitation of moral insight, a limitation we all share, but is disloyalty to God," or a break in the love relationship.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in considering the religious foundations of confession in the Bible, it must ever be kept in mind that "the history of the Kingdom of Israel down to its destruction is an interpretation of events against the background of the covenant."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, when the verb "confess" and the noun "confession" are used in the Old Testament, they generally have reference to open acknowledgment of "sin," or a violation of the covenant agreement between man and God. As Kenneth Grayston informs:

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<sup>1</sup>Randolph Crump Miller, Biblical Theology and Christian Education (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), pp. 57f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

All life is upheld by covenant, and the essence of sin is breach of covenant. . . . All sin, not only cultic transgression and direct apostasy, is violation of God because he is the soul of every Israelite covenant.<sup>1</sup>

As the object of the confession both the singular and/or collective form, "sin," is used (e.g., Leviticus 5:5; Numbers 5:7), and also the plural form, "sins," (e.g., Nehemiah 1:6; 9:2). Other objects found are "iniquity," or "iniquities," (e.g., Leviticus 16:21; 26:40; Psalms 38:18), "transgressions" (e.g., Psalms 32:5), and "abominations" (e.g., Ezekiel 12:16). The verb "confess" may also be used in the sense of "to profess," or "to acknowledge," with God himself as the object, as in Isaiah 48:1, but this is an uncommon usage in the Old Testament.

The significant point to be made in connection with the acknowledgment of sin against God is that such confession necessarily involved, and even presumed, acknowledgment of him as The God to be worshipped and served. For example, when the object of confession is God's "name," as in I Kings 8:33f.:

When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; if they turn to thee, and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication unto thee in this house: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Then, also, as J. Y. Campbell indicates:

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Grayston, "Sin," in A Theological Word Book of the Bible, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 227f.

<sup>2</sup>King James Version of the Bible.

This acknowledgment of God naturally passed into praise and thanksgiving, and the same Hebrew word which is translated "confession" in Josh. 7:19 and Ezra 10:11 is elsewhere translated "praise" (e.g., Ps. 42:4) or "thanksgiving" (e.g., Ps. 100:4); very often it has the concrete meaning of a thankoffering (e.g., II Chron. 29:31) or sacrifice of thanksgiving (e.g., Lev. 7:12f.).<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, it must be emphasized that the activity of confession in the Old Testament most commonly follows a violation of the covenant between man and God, and so is concerned with restoration and reconciliation.

A highly illustrative example of such a violation of the God-man covenant relationship may be seen in the account of David's dealings with Bathsheba and Uriah in II Samuel 11. Not only had the Law of Moses specifically forbidden coveting another man's wife (Exodus 20:7), but also adultery (Exodus 20:14), and murder (Exodus 20:13). So when David lusted after Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:2), lay with her (II Samuel 11:4), and then arranged to have her husband Uriah killed in battle (II Samuel 11:15), he was pointedly transgressing three of God's commandments. Accordingly, it is small wonder that "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (II Samuel 11:27). However, the Bible implies that David felt little remorse until the prophet Nathan sharply confronted him with his sin, charging, "You are the man" (II Samuel 12:7). Then David openly

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<sup>1</sup>J. Y. Campbell, "Confess-Confession," in A Theological Word Book of the Bible, p. 51.

confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord" (II Samuel 12: 13).

More revealing statements of David's feeling reactions to Nathan's accusation concerning Bathsheba and Uriah can be found in some of the Psalms which are generally attributed to his authorship. Old Testament scholar Franz Delitzsch advanced the possibility of David having written a number of Psalms during this period and suggested that four of them, Psalms 6, 38, 51 and 32, form a chronological series.<sup>1</sup> If such an ordering be accurate, these Psalms may indicate the development of his confession and express his feelings over the incident.

For instance, Psalm 6 may illustrate David's initial reaction as he begins to realize what he has done. He feels that he is "languishing," as his "bones are troubled" (vs. 2), but, worse than mere bodily affliction, his "soul also is sorely troubled" (vs. 3). He gives free expression to his frustration as he sobs, "I am weary with my moaning: every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping" (vs. 6). In Psalm 38 David continues the theme of penitential suffering with "thy arrows have sunk into me, and thy hand has come down on me" (vs. 2), thereby indicating his awareness of God's disappointment over their damaged relationship. He does not attempt to evade

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<sup>1</sup>Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Psalms (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), II, 20.

personal responsibility for his actions, but openly confesses:

There is no soundness in my flesh  
because of my indignation;  
There is no ill health in my bones  
because of my sin.  
For my iniquities have gone over my head;  
They weigh like a burden too heavy for me.

My wounds grow foul and fester  
because of my foolishness,  
I am utterly bowed down and prostrate;  
All the day I go about mourning.  
For my loins are filled with burning,  
and there is no soundness in my flesh.  
I am utterly spent and crushed;  
I groan because of the tumult of my heart.  
(vss. 3-8)

David then goes on to state that the anguish of his situation affects his relationships as well. His friends, companions, and even his relatives reject him, and "stand afar off" (vs. 11), so that he feels the terrible loneliness of estrangement. These people are not the only ones who cause David trouble, however. There are also outward enemies who "meditate treachery all the day long" (vs. 12), and who, to David's mind, find the occasion of his sin the way to prepare the way for his ruin. Delitzsch comments on this peculiarity of the penitential Psalms in that it

arises from the fact that the Old Testament believer, whose perception of sin was not as yet so spiritual and deep as that of the New Testament believer, almost always calls to mind some sinful act that has become openly known. The foes, who would then prepare for his ruin, are the instruments of the Satanic power of evil, which, as becomes perceptible to the New Testament believer even without the intervention of outward foes, desires the death of the sinning one, whereas God wills

that he should live.<sup>1</sup>

However, it is the threat to David's relationship with God that causes him the most concern, as he cries: "But for thee, O Lord, do I wait." It is in this God-relationship also that he has hope: "It is thou, O Lord my God, who wilt answer" (vs. 15). But at the same time David realizes that it is before God that he is most guilty: "For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me" (vs. 17). Accordingly, in utter humiliation he prostrates himself: "I confess my iniquity, I am sorry for my sin" (vs. 18).

Psalm 51 reveals the depth of conviction of sin which David now feels. There are no alibis, but he confesses: "I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (vs. 3). Also, there are no further references to others, but, rather, David's God-relationship is now made central: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight" (vs. 4). But before David can be restored to right relationship with God there is much reformation to be done. Hence, David fervently pleads: "Have mercy," "blot out" (vs. 1), "wash me," "cleanse me" (vs. 2), "teach me" (vs. 6), "purge me" (vs. 7), "fill me" (vs. 8), "deliver me" (vs. 14). Yet these changes alone are still not sufficient for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

reconciliation, so David finally prays for an entirely new spirit itself:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from thy presence,  
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit. (vss. 10-12)

Then, as if in retrospect of the change pleaded for above having taken place, Psalm 32 begins: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (vs. 1). And, in recalling the anguish experienced in estrangement from God, David relates:

When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me;  
My strength was dried up as by the heat of  
summer. (vss. 3, 4)

But David had declared his sin, and from this confession came the possibility for his reconciliation into accepting relationship with God. As David explains:

I acknowledged my sin to thee,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the  
Lord";  
Then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. (vs. 5)

And now David rejoices in his forgiveness, claiming, "Many are the pangs of the wicked: but steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the Lord" (vs. 10). Delitzsch claims that Psalm 32 reflects David's subsequent deliverance from the "fearful anguish of soul" in which he composed Psalm 51. Further, Delitzsch summarizes:

The theme of this Psalm is the precious treasure which he (i.e., David) brought up out of that abyss of spiritual distress, viz., the doctrine of the blessedness of forgiveness, the sincere and unreserved confession of sin as the way to it, and the protection of God in every danger, together with joy in God, as its fruits.<sup>1</sup>

But, while David himself may have experienced restoration into relationship through his confession to God, the record of the Hebrews as a whole is not as optimistic. For the history of the nation of Israel, the chosen people of God, indicates that they persistently violated their covenant relationship in spite of the repeated warnings of impending doom voiced by the Old Testament prophets. Finally, one of the most sensitive of these spokesmen, the prophet Jeremiah, laments that the original covenant has been transgressed beyond repair.<sup>2</sup> But, amazing as it seems, there shines a distant ray of hope amidst man's gloom, for:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers . . . my covenant which they broke. . . . But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 393.

<sup>2</sup>Paul E. Johnson, in his Psychology of Religion (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 18, describes Jeremiah as "the psychologist of the Hebrew prophets," and states: "He identified himself with his people but was always their unyielding critic, reproving their follies (10:3) and pleading with them to return from their deceits to the true way of life (15:19). The profound stirring of his emotions and convictions reveals the distresses and progress of his faith."



will put my law within them, and will write it upon their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

Hence, this new hope for man's relationship with God is distinctively different from the former covenant. It is not linked to the Israelite nation, for Israel had broken the covenant. Rather, the new covenant will consist of a whole new kind of relationship: it will call for not merely external obedience to God's law, which is only superficial, but, instead, a soul-searching inner obedience. This is so because the law itself is within, written on the very heart of man. John Bright comments:

Here perhaps more than anywhere else the Old Covenant reaches out for the New. Here we learn of all false hopes for the redemption of man. . . . The earthly order is at its best a pale approximation of God's order, at its worst a travesty of it. . . . But here also we learn of the true hope. It lies in the grace of God, who accords to men a New Covenant,--its law written on human hearts. The people of this covenant are the people of God's kingdom, for they are the pure in heart who have been, as it were, born again. The Old Covenant thus points to a solution beyond itself--the creation of a new people.<sup>1</sup>

This "new people" actually came into existence in the first century of our present era, "when the time had fully come" (Galatians 4:4). They were those who recognized and accepted Jesus of Nazareth as no less than the long-awaited Messiah. They realized that in him all the ancient hope of Israel has found its fulfillment and become present fact. To know Jesus as God's Son, Lord and Savior,

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<sup>1</sup>Bright, op. cit., p. 126.

meant that these people were in a vital and life-giving relationship with him: vital, as it pertained to every aspect of their existence, and life-giving, as Jesus himself explained, in that, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).<sup>1</sup> This abundant life is to be seen as being qualitatively different from that of the former covenant: it is entirely a new relationship, for, "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

Accordingly, this newness is itself to be appropriated by the followers of Jesus the Christ--the Christians--through personal faith in his death and resurrection. The Apostle Paul exclaims that Christians are to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), and to be motivated to avoid sin and obey God "as men who have been brought from death to life" (Romans 6:13). As such, each Christian is himself "in Christ" and, therefore, a "new creation" (I Corinthians 5:17).

One of the distinctive characteristics of the newness in the ministry of Jesus is his concern for individuals. While his preaching often attracted large crowds, a definite impression is conveyed that he preferred not to be attended by great numbers, but to minister to a few. Further, most of his recorded teaching is addressed to small groups or imparted in conversation with individuals. His

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<sup>1</sup>King James Version.

stress upon the importance of the one can be seen in the three parables he tells in Luke 15, dealing, respectively, with the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. The effect of this individual emphasis is that not only is each Christian to see himself in a personal relationship with God, but that as the object of God's loving care he is of great worth. Hence, the aspect of personal responsibility in maintaining the new covenant is elevated to a higher dimension. Each Christian is made aware of his own accountability for his deeds, and so is encouraged to singly confess and repent.

In the New Testament various forms of the stem-word "confess" are used, and in differing ways. The verb form is used, pertaining to the confession of sins, as in Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; James 5:16; and I John 1:9. This last passage is generally regarded as a "proof-text" to indicate God's forgiveness following open acknowledgment of transgression before him. A more common usage of the word is in the sense of "to acknowledge," "to admit," "to declare," that something is so, as in John 1:20; Acts 24:14; Hebrews 11:13; I John 4:2, 3. Yet another variety of the word is explained by Campbell in that:

In Matt. 7:23; I Tim. 6:12; Tit. 1:16, the AV uses "profess" instead of "confess" to render the same Gk. verb. A special development of this meaning is, to make a profession of faith, as in Phil. 2:11, "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Rom. 10:9 ought to be trans. similarly "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, 'Jesus, is Lord!'; this was

probably the earliest baptismal creed of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

In support of this suggestion that confession of faith was a part of the baptism ceremony in the early church, Oscar Cullmann affirms:

It is clear from the situation of primitive Christianity that in our earliest baptismal liturgy, which develops into the later, affirmation of faith in the form of a confession had an assured place.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that confession of sins was an integral part of the baptisms administered by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5). Also, the significance of baptism as an act administered to individuals again emphasizes the personal and singular character of the relationship sought by God under this new covenant.

But the really soul-searching aspect of the new covenant relationship was the "heart appeal" made by Jesus. Not being content with merely an outward and surface response, Jesus spoke to the hearts of men, thereby making a distinction between what they verbally said and how they actually felt. He often quotes Isaiah to this effect, as, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:18; Mark 7:6). Knowing that matters of feelings are not logical categories, he describes stubbornness as "hardness of heart" (Matthew 19:8;

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<sup>1</sup>Campbell, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Cullmann, Baptism in the New Testament (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1956), p. 52.

Mark 10:5), while preaching, "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8). Jesus holds that real convictions arise from the heart, as "what is sown in his heart" (Matthew 13:18), "what comes out of a man proceeds from the heart" (Matthew 18:35), "love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Mark 12:30), "perceive with their heart" (John 12:40). This emphasis upon the heart, or conscience, of each man was essential in bringing each into personal awareness of his relationship to Jesus. Even more significant, however, is the contrast thereby made between the Old and New Covenants, because, as Paul states, the new relationship is not written on "tablets of stone," as was the Law of Moses, but, rather, "on tablets of human hearts" (II Corinthians 3:3). Hence, the new relationship is not something exterior, or detached from people's daily lives, but instead people "show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness" (Romans 2:15). In his concern for new Christians, Paul prays that "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:17). Consequently, as E. C. Blackman quotes: "'The heart is above all the central place in man to which God turns, where religious experience has its root, which determines conduct.'"<sup>1</sup>

Confession, therefore, is to be made from the

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<sup>1</sup>E. C. Blackman, "Mind-Heart," in A Theological Word Book of the Bible, p. 145.

heart, out of a felt need for reconciliation from estrangement. It is made at baptism in response to a heart-searching examination of sins, striving for repentance (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5), in relationship to God. Within the community of believers, the Church fellowship, or "Body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:27), confession is to be made, along with prayer (James 5:13-16), for the general welfare and health.

The above cited passage from James is an interesting example of a suggested carry-over of Old Testament practice into the New Testament Church. It was an ancient Jewish custom for a sick man to make his confession to a rabbi, or rabbis, who would visit him in his confinement. As James Hardy Ropes quotes an ancient Jewish document:

"From the time when a man takes to his bed, they come to him and say, 'Words neither revive one, nor do they kill.' (After exhorting the sick man to set his worldly affairs in order, as Isaiah did Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20, if he sees that the sick man is dangerously ill, the visitor says), 'Confess before thou diest, for there are many who have confessed and died not; others who did not confess have died. Again perhaps on the merit of thy confession thou wilt recover.' If he can confess with his mouth, he does so. If not, he confesses in his heart. Both the man who confesses with his mouth and the man who confesses in his heart are alike, provided that he directs his mind to God and his understanding is clear."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>James Hardy Ropes, The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 304.

James is evidently recommending that such confession be continued, although it is not clear whether, by "elders," he refers to clergy or laity. Alexander Souter explains this word as possibly meaning "a title of honour applied among Jews to various classes of dignitary, because such offices were originally conferred on the old."<sup>1</sup> James seems to suggest, in verse 16, that if Christians habitually confess their sins to one another there will be no special confession required when any of them falls ill. In any case, this passage is the only one of its kind in the New Testament, and is considered to be a relatively late practice.

All in all, the religious foundations of confession are of very ancient origin and arise out of the sense of relationship between the worshippers and their God. Hence, the nature of this confession consists of the petitions of anxious believers who seek reconciliation into relationship with the divine by acknowledging their faults and pleading for God's mercy. This relationship is relatively impersonal under the Covenant God of the Old Testament, being largely tied up to the nation of Israel as such. But in the New Testament the Covenant becomes much more individualized, being rooted in the person of Jesus Christ, and resulting from the individual relationship into which he invites all men, the law now being written on their hearts.

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Souter, A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 213.

Yet it must be noted that in the biblical accounts of early Christian practice, the act of confession is not at all formalized or standardized. This was to be a development of the post-Apostolic church.

### Psychotherapeutic Foundations

Confession presupposes a state of consciousness within man, and the psychotherapeutic foundations of confession are most accurately considered by initially focusing upon the history of man's consciousness itself. This state of consciousness is the result of years without number in man's development, with origins stretching back to the very beginnings of life. Accordingly, Erich Neumann advises: "The individualized conscious man of our era is a late man, whose structure is built on early pre-individual human stages from which individual consciousness has only detached itself step by step."<sup>1</sup>

As man's consciousness grew it was accompanied by the mounting self-awareness of "being different--which is the primary fact of nascent ego consciousness and which occurs in the dawnlight of discrimination."<sup>2</sup> Further, man gradually became aware of the respective distinctions between subject and object, which marked the beginning of

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1954), p. xx.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 109.



his experience of relationships. With this discovery there came a realization of his own independent existence, and the startling feeling of loneliness, "which is the necessary concomitant of egohood and particularly of an ego conscious of its own existence."<sup>1</sup>

But man found this loneliness to be very threatening. It was frightening to feel one's self to be different and detached from others--frightening and dangerous. Already the urge for positive relationships was strong, both to provide allies for defense in time of attack, and because man simply found that he enjoyed fellowship with other human beings. And so primitive society developed, generally along clan or tribal lines.

Man's problems, his troubles, both of body and mind, had a very early beginning, too, and it is interesting to note how he sought relief. Weatherhead declares:

As soon as man appeared, he began to deal with pain and illness, and it is important for our study to realize that from the earliest times, long before the Christian Era and long before anything that could be called medical science was born, men were healed of their diseases by non-physical methods directed towards their minds rather than their bodies. They sought integration or wholeness of personality, and found it through processes of the mind and spirit.<sup>2</sup>

In considering these "processes of the mind and spirit" at this point it is essential to have a clear understanding of the respective anthropologies, or views of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 115.    <sup>2</sup>Weatherhead, op. cit., p. 19.

the nature of man, which underlie both the religious and psychotherapeutic foundations of confession. And there are distinct differences. For the Old Testament Hebrews, man is considered to be a totality, a psychosomatic unity, body and soul intimately and inextricably related. William Graham Cole advises, "The Genesis narrative does not assert that man was supplied with a soul but rather that he became a living soul."<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for "soul" is נֶפֶשׁ , or nephesh, which refers not to a soul-like or spiritual aspect but to the fact of living itself. Hence, it refers to a breathing creature, in a dynamic sense. Cole continues:

The Israelite use of nephesh is very close to what modern psychology means by the term "personality." It is the totality of the individual, that which marks him with a unique stamp, making him what he is. His family background, his culture, his physical appearance, his temperament, his idiosyncrasies, his hopes and fears--all of these belong to his soul. They determine his being and his action. All his acts are to be understood as springing from his soul. No item of his behavior is isolated. Every word and deed is symptomatic, revealing the true character of the total man. They derive from the vital center of his being which is his soul.<sup>2</sup>

While Hebrew language also contains the word בָּשָׂר, basar, usually translated as "flesh," or "body," it is not used in the sense of contrasting "body" with "soul." Robert McAfee

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<sup>1</sup>William Graham Cole, Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Brown clarifies the situation by stating, "There is, in fact, no distinctive word for 'body' in Hebrew; such a word is not needed because there is no separate part of man, distinct from his 'soul,' which needs to be so distinguished."<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, in the ancient Hellenistic world, the situation was vastly different. For here:

In Greek thought, particularly as it comes from Orphism and as it is expressed in earlier Platonic dialogues, there is a marked dualism between the soul and the body. The soul belongs to a divine, eternal realm, and is the undying, indestructible part of man, which is unfortunately confined to the body during life on earth. The body is nothing but a hindrance to the soul.<sup>2</sup>

Rudolf Bultmann further explains this Hellenistic dualism, particularly as understood by the Stoics, in that:

The body is regarded as a vessel, as the prison of the soul, as a burden from which the spirit strives to get free. It is often called by the contemptuous diminutive *σώματιον*, or alternatively, "flesh," again often with the equally contemptuous diminutive *σαρκίδιον*. Its antithesis is the rational part of man, his "daemon," which is even called spiritus sacer.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, in this dualism, man's flesh is evil, while his soul is good. Therefore, for Greek man salvation involves the extrication of the soul from the body, so that his virtuous

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<sup>1</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, "Soul (Body)," in A Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 356.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 354f.

<sup>3</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 142.

immortal part ultimately finds release from his finite, mortal prison.

Christianity and western culture are the inheritors of both Hebrew and Greek traditions concerning the nature of man, and to some degree Christianity can be understood to represent a synthesis. The Apostle Paul, writing in the New Testament, also makes a dualistic distinction between the  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ , psyche, or "soul" of man and his  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\varsigma$ , sarx, or "flesh."<sup>1</sup> He even contrasts the two in terms of warfare, which seems to give the impression of a Hellenistic dualism, but such is actually not the case. In explaining this dualism in Paul, Cole comments:

It appears as though he regarded the body as evil and the soul as good. But a closer examination reveals that his meaning is quite different. He was using Greek terms, pregnant with dualistic association, but he was using them not as the Greek philosophers but as the Jewish rabbis. The words were simply translations of their Hebrew counterparts, taken from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. And in every case, Paul reveals his Jewish orientation. The term he used for "flesh," for example, is sarx, a rendering of the Hebrew basar, which does not mean the body as opposed to the mind, or soul, not even in Hellenistic literature. The Hebrew basar and the Pauline sarx both mean the totality of the person as he exists

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<sup>1</sup>This is the dichotomy view of the human organism which sees man as composed of only two essential elements:  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\varsigma$ , sarx, or "flesh," and  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ , psyche, "soul." Another position is that of the trichotomy, which holds that man is composed of three essential elements: "flesh," "soul," and  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ , pneuma, or "spirit." For a further discussion of this distinction see the article, "Soul," in David and Gehman, op. cit., p. 576.

apart from God, seeking to live out of his own resources.<sup>1</sup>

James S. Stewart substantiates Cole's position concerning Paul's use of the word "flesh," stating:

It is human nature in its frailty and weakness and need of help. It is man apart from God. "What, indeed, does flesh mean," exclaims Barth, "but the complete inadequacy of the creature when he stands before the creator?" It is not in itself base; and it is well to remind ourselves that of the notion of the inherent evil of matter, which was a characteristic Gnostic doctrine, there is not a trace in Paul. His dualism is not cosmic, or metaphysical, but practical and moral. But though not evil in itself, the flesh is that part of man's nature which gives evil its opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

The point at which Christianity may be considered somewhat of a synthesis between the unitary concept of man held by the Old Testament Hebrews and the dualism of Hellenistic thought can be found in the dualistic use of the Apostle Paul of the components of man's body. Brown declares:

In Pauline thought, for example, the body (soma) is an inclusive word for the psycho-physical unity of the flesh (sax) and soul (psyche). No hard and fast distinction between the two can be made. The body is the whole man, and not a detachable part of man which is distinguished in dualistic fashion from the soul. J. A. T. Robinson, summarizing a discussion of the matter, says: "Man does not have a body; he is a body. . . . He is flesh-animated-by-soul, the whole conceived as a psycho-physical unity." . . . D. R. G. Owen concludes a long survey of the New Testament materials with the comment: "There is little trace of body-soul dualism; instead, man is regarded as a unity. This personal unity that is man can be called, as a whole,

<sup>1</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>James S. Stewart, A Man in Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers), p. 104.

either soma (body) or psyche (soul) or sarx (flesh) or pneuma (spirit), depending on the point of view from which man is being considered, but the point is that none of these terms refer to a part of man; they all refer to the whole."<sup>1</sup>

The above discussion of anthropological distinctions has been entered upon at some length since it is considered pertinent to the remainder of this investigation. The biblical concepts were dealt with in this section (rather than under "Religious Foundations") as it was felt that they could most profitably be considered in relation to the Hellenistic view, which rightly is treated under "Psychotherapeutic Foundations." The significant point to be received from this discussion is that while the psychotherapeutic foundations of confession were influenced by a Greek dualistic understanding of man, in the long range view it has been the Christian understanding of man as a unity which has made the most marked impression on Western culture, and upon subsequent psychotherapeutic development.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this integrated view of man, and the corresponding methods of seeking relief from illness, primitive man's troubles of the mind were not treated in isolation. As Walter Bromberg explains:

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, op. cit., pp. 355f. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the impact of dualism upon contemporary theology and psychiatry see Alfred Schmieding, "The Dualism Problem," What, Then, Is Man? (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 316-321.

During these early periods, mental healing was not perceived as a distinct discipline or art. It was synonymous with and indistinguishable from "religion" in the sense of a series of activities pointing toward intercession with gods or the supernatural world generally. Indeed, ancient medicine itself was invested with a large share of interest in influencing the supernatural.<sup>1</sup>

Directly related and associated with primitive man's conception of the supernatural was his view towards magic. Sigmund Freud understood this early magic as "the technique of animism," which he saw as the first of three great world systems of thought, the other two being the religious and the scientific.<sup>2</sup> Freud claimed that the use of magic by primitives "clearly and unmistakably shows the tendency of forcing the laws of psychic life upon the reality of things, under conditions where spirits did not yet have to play any role, and could still be taken as objects of magic treatment."<sup>3</sup> Other authorities see a more concurrent relationship between primitive man's understanding of the magical and spiritual realms. In illustration, Bromberg declares: "The magical world and the supernatural world, areas which are roughly synonymous, were the repository of all that prehistoric man could not understand in

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Bromberg, The Mind of Man: A History of Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," in The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 867.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 877.

terms of everyday life."<sup>1</sup> And there was much that man could not understand. So, in his fear of the unknown and in view of the many threats which constantly caused him distress, man came more and more to place his trust in the tribal medicine man. The medicine man gradually became a figure of great authority. His powers grew with the circumstances, and he gradually became heir to a body of knowledge useful to divining weather, casting spells, undoing mischief and healing the physically sick and mentally distraught.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, he was believed to possess supernatural gifts, as both a magician and a priest. In contrast, "the ordinary man ceded his interest in healing and in cosmic problems to the priests and magicians," for the general understanding was that "mental healing and the religious spirit were inextricably mixed in their psychological origins."<sup>3</sup>

The significance of this earliest period for ascertaining the psychotherapeutic foundations of confession is of mixed value. On the one hand, there is relatively no emphasis upon confession as such, nor are sin and guilt dealt with in any recognized manner. Instead, disturbances

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<sup>1</sup>Bromberg, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>For a more complete discussion on the powers and superstitions concerning the medicine man as magician and king, see Theodor H. Gaster (ed.), The New Golden Bough (New York: Criterion Books, 1959).

<sup>3</sup>Bromberg, op. cit., p. 18.



are felt to result from being out of harmony with the course of nature. On the other hand, the foregoing discussion definitely sets the framework for considering man as a self-conscious, thinking, feeling individual who seeks alleviation from the dangers he feels, both of mind and body, by the most helpful means known to him. The outstanding feature of this earliest era was that even then individual man was regarded as a functioning whole. That is, there was a unitary concept of illness, so that neither mind nor body was treated separately, but were viewed as a total mechanism. Correspondingly, the healer, too, was not two or more persons, but one, that generally being the medicine man who filled the roles of both priest and physician.

As civilization developed with the passage of time, the means of dealing with human distress became more sophisticated. John T. McNeill, in his classical work, A History of the Cure of Souls, devotes an entire chapter to this development among the cultures of Asia.<sup>1</sup> However, subsequent Western civilization has been more influenced by the progress made in Greece. Here the Delphic oracle of Apollo, even prior to the sixth century, B. C., exercised a remarkable moral influence. After a serious crime, such as homicide, the guilty individual was debarred, or cut off

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<sup>1</sup>John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), pp. 42-66.

from all temple fellowship and association until exacting purification rites had been filled. McNeill comments:

This excommunication, and the severity of the rites of atonement, gave a new seriousness to the pollution of blood-guilt in the consciousness of the Greeks. . . . In the Apollo cult no mere formal penance but inward and sincere repentance was required.<sup>1</sup>

In further testimony of the impact of the Greek culture upon psychotherapeutic beginnings, Bromberg holds, "The earliest beginnings of a planned or 'conscious' psychotherapy could be said to start with the Greeks contemporaneously with the emergence of Greek philosophy."<sup>2</sup> One of the leading Greek philosophers, Socrates, was himself very influential in this development, for, as James Adams says, "It is primarily as the ἰατρὸς τῆς ψυχῆς --the physician or healer of the soul--that he regards himself."<sup>3</sup> The Socratic method was one of dialogue between Socrates and his pupils, in which, through exacting logic, Socrates guided his conversationalist into philosophic "confession." He claimed "an unexamined life is not worthy of a man."<sup>4</sup>

One of the most interesting forms of Greek healing is that connected with the name of Asklepios, or Aesculapius. He was known as the Greek god of medicine, although

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 17.    <sup>2</sup>Bromberg, op. cit., pp. 25f.

<sup>3</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 20. In this connection it is interesting to note that the English word "psychiatry" is rooted in the two Greek words, ψυχή, or psyche, ("breath, life, soul, mind") and ἰατρός, or iatros, ("healer, physician").

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

his appeal was warmly personal, rather than scientific. Angus declares, "Aesculapius was 'the great lover of men,' the divine physician who heals because he loves."<sup>1</sup> If he once was human he seems to have become a demi-god, and then entirely to have lost his human character. At any rate, temples were erected to him, and he was invoked as a god with the power to heal infirmities of mind and body.

Patients were bathed and massaged by skilled attendants, and a type of mental suggestion, called "incubation," was used. The patient, having entered the temple or the halls especially built for incubation, lay down on the floor on a pallet. In the impressive surroundings, the god Asclepius revealed himself directly to everyone who needed his help. The god was seen by the incubant in a dream, whereupon the patient entered into personal contact with him, and he proceeded to heal the disease brought to his attention or advised a treatment to be followed. Sometimes ventriloquism on the part of the priest-attendants aided the patient's spirit to converse with his Aesculapian god.<sup>2</sup>

As can be gathered from the above description, the "patients" of Asklepios were evidently in a highly suggestible state, being the focus of the attendants' ministrations from their entrance into the impressive temple. The patients remained in the temple all night, sleeping in the precincts, while priest-physicians, who had prepared the minds of the patients by lectures and talks, whispered suggestions in the name of the loving god into their ears.

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<sup>1</sup>S. Angus, The Mystery-Religions and Christianity (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1928), pp. 229f.

<sup>2</sup>Bromberg, op. cit., pp. 26f.

Such "temple sleep" was not unusual for that period. Neither was the fact that dreams were relied upon to explain the nature of an illness, even though Socrates had said, "To regard dreams seriously is absurd: they are the confused results of indigestion."<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this study, it is noted that whereas confession did not play a direct role in the healing, the patient was considered to have entered into a "personal contact," or relationship, with the God. Hence, the suggestibility of the drive towards recovery was reinforced.

With the contributions of Hippocrates (ca. 470 B.C.), however, the suspicious nature of such healing temples resulted in their falling into sad repute. Hippocrates, the "Father of Modern Medicine," was a tremendous figure. "He came into a world full of shrines to Asklepios, full of superstition and the ascription of disease to distant planets and to supernatural cause, and seems to have been the first to deny the supernatural origin of disease."<sup>2</sup> Hippocrates and his followers approached anxieties of the mind as natural phenomena, objectively, and free of the earlier superstition. Further:

Though his clinical observations were more medical than psychiatric, his influence proved to be significant in the evolution of psychiatric thinking. . . . For

<sup>1</sup>Sir T. C. Allbutt, Greek Medicine in Rome--Fitzpatrick Lectures, 1909-1910 (London: Macmillan, 1921), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Weatherhead, op. cit., p. 22.

example, hysteria was shrewdly considered by him to be due to the movement of the womb (hysteron) throughout the body. He antedated by two thousand years the modern findings of the place of sexuality in the neurosis.<sup>1</sup>

And it was Hippocrates who first suggested the organism's innate drive towards wholeness, stating, "It is nature itself that finds the way; though untaught and uninstructed, it does what is proper."<sup>2</sup>

### Summary

These, then, are the religious and psychotherapeutic foundations of confession. As such they provide the framework for understanding the nature of confession itself. As foundations they do not always include the experience of confession, as such, but rather show the ancient means utilized to restore equilibrium to man's crippled situation.

These foundations begin at the beginning: with the origins of man's consciousness of himself as a separate person, feeling lonely and afraid, and as he becomes aware of his estrangement from meaningful relationship. The religious foundations can meaningfully be considered in relation to the concept of a bilateral covenant between man and God. As man falls out of this covenant relationship, he seeks reconciliation and acceptance through confession. The covenant agreement itself changes from the original

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<sup>1</sup>Bromberg, op. cit., p. 28.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

covenant with the Israelite nation, the recorded Law of Moses, to a new covenant open to all who will receive the Lord Jesus Christ, the requirements for the relationship being written on human hearts.

The psychotherapeutic foundations stem from the needs of self-conscious man to find relief in his distress, both of mind and body. Beginning with a unitary concept of illness, he availed himself of the tribal medicine man and the priest-physician. Under the influence of Greek dualistic thinking he sought to subjugate his evil body so as to free his immortal soul from its prison of flesh. In the healing temples of Asklepios he came under the influence of such psychological methods as suggestion and suppression. With the coming of Hippocrates man's treatment received a more scientifically sound approach, although confession still did not play a specific part in his restoration to psychic harmony.

The nature of confession implies relationships. Even more, it implies the distortion, and even the destruction, of these relationships. To the degree that the relationships themselves are vital, essential, and needed for meaningful living, to that degree will the pain of the resultant separation and estrangement be experienced. The nature of confession, then, is the nature of the experience which will restore the anguished personality into relationship, communication, and community. Hence, confession has significance for both theology and psychology.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONFESSION FOR THEOLOGY

#### The Doctrine of Sin

In considering the significance of confession in theology the discussion must begin with an understanding of the doctrine of sin. This is true because theology itself is understood as the "study of the nature of God and His relations to man and the universe,"<sup>1</sup> and, as Gustaf Aulen declares, "Sin is that which breaks the fellowship with God."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, while the relationship between God and man was originally one of mutual fellowship, it soon became crippled and estranged, with the respective parties alienated as the result of sin. Therefore, "sin is a concept which cannot be used except in a religious sense."<sup>3</sup> Aulen justifies the treatment of sin as solely a religious category in that:

There is no sin which is not sin against God. It is meaningless to talk about sin if it has no relation to God. . . . From the viewpoint of Christian faith it

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence L. Barnhart (ed.), Thorndike-Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1958), II, 799.

<sup>2</sup>Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 259.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





hundred men among the Benjaminites who were left-handed and says that "every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss." The Hebrew lexicon defines the verb in its derived ethical usage as meaning to "miss the goal or path of right and duty." The related noun signifies, says Delitzsch, "a deviation from that which is well pleasing to God."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, this word for "sin" means to "miss the mark," or to fail to do something in relationship to God, a deviation from the right way. Grayston relates the basic thrust of this word to other Hebrew words, claiming:

The same idea underlies 'awon (iniquity), shagah (err), and 'wl (wicked). A group of seven words is represented by "perverse," meaning any deviation, distortion, crookedness of what is properly upright.<sup>2</sup>

Another very significant Hebrew verb which connotes "sin" is ל ש פ , Pesha'. From the root form this word carries the powerful force of sinful man as a rebel. Grayston defines it as meaning "rebellion against a superior or unfaithfulness to an agreement. . . . Together with associated terms it describes sin as a personal, voluntary act."<sup>3</sup> Milton enlarges upon this meaning:

Both verb and noun presuppose the personal relationship between God and his people under the covenant. . . . When seen from this angle, sin is more than an accidental act of transgression of an impersonal law: it is a personal revolt against rightful authority, it is the wilful rebellion of man against the loving will of God. . . . The primary emphasis is upon an inner attitude rather than an external act.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John P. Milton, The Psalms (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1954), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Grayston, op. cit., p. 227.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Milton, op. cit., p. 46.

Of positive value for a dynamic understanding of the Old Testament concept of sin is Milton's point that man's inner attitude of revolt is often the motivation for his action. Here sin is disobedience. This is especially significant in view of the bilateral covenant relationship. It was this personal revolt, or trespass, of the ancient Hebrew man which prompted him to "deviate from the right way," or to "miss the mark." Therefore, as Grayston summarizes: "There is a fundamental, unified conception of sin characterized in part as failure, in part as irregularity or crookedness, in part as infringement of the psychic totality of the soul."<sup>1</sup> Hence, as sin is seen, even in part, as "infringement of the psychic totality of the soul," it results in his being less than whole (i.e., complete) in the erstwhile integrated nature of his inmost being. Grayston goes on to explain this aspect:

In the old Israelite view of life, good actions are normal and must produce good results. Sinful actions are abnormal, preying on the positive forces of life. The righteous soul is upright; the sinful soul is crooked. Sin means dissolution of the soul, and the soul entirely sinful is no longer reckoned a human soul.<sup>2</sup>

Yet it must be emphasized that it was not entirely the wrong actions themselves which were sinful: it was also the general attitude of disobedience to the will of God.

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<sup>1</sup>Grayston, op. cit., p. 227. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. (Italics mine.)

It was this situation which resulted in the "dissolution of the soul." Accordingly, in his less-than-whole condition sinful man is crippled, or "crooked," as a result of having broken out of relationship with God. The way to restoration lies in open acknowledgment of his sin, as in confession, for:

Confession of sin (Ps. 32:5; 38:18) not only in the cult but face to face with God (Ps. 51), wins forgiveness and so the soul is restored to wholeness; "thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isa. 38:17).<sup>1</sup>

The New Testament treatment of the concept of sin is somewhat varied. In the first place, there are few direct references to sin in the synoptic gospels, although all four gospels describe the work of Jesus the Christ in relation to it. As for Jesus himself, he "neither speculated about sin, nor explained what he understood by it. He simply reckoned with its reality."<sup>2</sup> Millar Burrows furnishes further explanation concerning Jesus:

Jesus never speaks of sin in the abstract, but always of specific sins. The word "sin" occurs in the singular only once in the synoptic gospels (Mt. 12:31), and even there the meaning is not "all sin," but "every sin." . . . The content of Jesus' conception of sin differs from that prevalent in Judaism only as his conception of the will of God differs from the current conception. His interpretation of the will of God in terms of love for God and one's neighbor makes his idea of sin more searching and strict than anything in the Old Testament or in Judaism. Sin is any failure to realize the ideal of being worthy children of the Father, as perfect in love as he is. Hence, not simply

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 228.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the act but the purpose is involved; the inner attitude is fundamental.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, Jesus, too, saw sin as in relation to God, but he speaks more about specific deeds as "sins." Again, also, his "heart-appeal" is evident.<sup>2</sup> Yet, while denouncing "sins," his ministry is continually directed towards the "sinner" (ἁμαρτωλός), whom Grayston understands as including the following categories:

- a. In the OT sense of "godless," i.e., one living in conscious contradiction of the law. . . . They are therefore distinguished from both Pharisees and ordinary people.
- b. The am ha-'arets (people of the land) who are sinners, not because they transgress the law, but because they do not hold the Pharisaic interpretation of it.
- c. The heathen. . . .
- d. Those who were separated, consciously or not, from God.<sup>3</sup>

In the writings of the Apostle Paul sin is commonly depicted in connection with the verb ἁμαρτάνω, hamartano, meaning "I miss the mark." As such, it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew verb חָטָא, Hata'ah. A fundamental example of this usage is Romans 3:23: "All have sinned [i.e., missed the mark] and fall short of the glory of God." Hence, sin is herein described as the objective condition in which men lack the image of God, whether or not they know it or acknowledge responsibility

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<sup>1</sup>Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 169.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 25f.    <sup>3</sup>Grayston, op. cit., p. 228.

for it. Yet Paul also sees a deeper aspect of man's nature, as Burrows explains his thought:

Paul has a new and distinctive idea of the nature of sin. Like Jesus, he speaks of "sins" (I Cor. 15:3); he also uses the Old Testament words "transgression" and "trespass." In sharp contrast to Jesus, however, he often and characteristically speaks of sin in the abstract, as an alien power resident in the body.<sup>1</sup>

A clear example of Paul's concept of sin as an "alien power" within man is found in Romans 5:12-8:10. Here sin is regarded almost as a personified power which reigns over man (Romans 5:21; 6:12) and enslaves him (Romans 6:17, 20; 7:14, 23) so that he experiences conflict between his own inclinations and the power by which he is possessed (Romans 7:17, 20). "There are in fact two laws in conflict: the law of life and the law of death (Rom. 7:25; 8:2; the conflict is also described as sin-grace, Rom. 5:20, righteousness-iniquity (anomia), II Cor. 6:14)."<sup>2</sup> Hence, here Paul relates sin to death itself, as a consequence of man's disobedience to God's law.

It is at the point of the conflict within man that Paul sees the significance of the law, for, "It is the function of the law to show up sin for what it is by laying down commandments (Rom. 7:13), so that 'through the law cometh the knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3:20)."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, Paul can recognize that the law is "holy," "just and good"

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<sup>1</sup>Burrows, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>2</sup>Grayston, op. cit., p. 229. <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

(Romans 7:12), as it served to point up man's sinfulness and so prepared the way for God's salvation. Burrows further comments: "This whole set of ideas is an extraordinary example of effort to integrate personal experience and inherited conceptions. It gains new significance from our growing recognition of the irrational bases of conduct."<sup>1</sup>

The remainder of the New Testament offers no essentially new or distinctive ideas pertaining to the idea of sin, although the Johannine literature presents some differing aspects. The Gospel of John sees sin as a quality of life which expresses itself in thought, word, and deed (John 8:21, 24, 34). However, the nearest John comes to an actual definition of what sin is seems to be a simple lack of faith in Jesus (John 16:8, 9). John's First Epistle is somewhat more specific, connecting "sins" with definite "lawlessness," or acts of wrongdoing. Grayston clarifies this association in that

John deliberately adopted this definition (anomia--lawlessness, adikia--unrighteousness, I John 1:9, 3:4, 5:17) because he was combatting the belief that Christians in communion with God had been given a new nature so that nothing they did would be sin. This was akin to John's own position (I John 3:4ff; cf. I Pet. 4:1); but he did not believe that Christians were so changed that the need for moral striving was removed (I John 1:5-2:2).<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the biblical understanding of the doctrine of sin is seen in terms of disruption of the

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<sup>1</sup>Burrows, loc. cit.      <sup>2</sup>Grayston, op. cit., p. 229.

relationship between God and man. In the Old Testament this situation is described in terms of the word-pictures of "missing the mark," "deviation from the right way," "rebellion," "transgression," and "trespass," with an emphasis upon man's willful disobedience. The result of such behavior is that man's very soul becomes fragmented, so that he is less than whole. The New Testament concept lays greater stress on the fact of man's inner nature, so that sin is a violation of God's love and the non-fulfillment of the great ideal which he has planned for his children. Jesus saw sin as a positive reality of life and sinners as being those who lived in separation from God because of the sinful condition of their hearts. Paul continues many Old Testament concepts, including "missing the mark," but sees it more in terms of falling short of the glory of God, with a separation resulting. He also sees this separation in terms of a life and death conflict within individual man himself, as a battle rages between the "law of sin" and the "law of my mind" (Romans 7:23), so that man is also torn in his members. In both the Old Testament (Psalms 32:5) and the New Testament (I John 1:9) confession of sins to God is seen as the way to forgiveness--yet it must be emphasized that the idea of confession of sins is not well developed. Nor is the biblical doctrine of sin itself clearly set forth in a formalized manner.

The situation is quite different when considering

the doctrine of sin held by the Roman Catholic Church. Here there is much structure: sin is defined, its origin is established, and even distinctive categories of sins are recognized. And all of this is accomplished within the legislated framework of precise Roman dogma.

Initially, sin is viewed against the background of the purpose of human existence itself, which is stated simply as "the supreme truth that in the possession of God alone is human happiness and perfection to be found."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, "once granted that God is the end or purpose of human life, the true idea of sin becomes apparent. It is an offense against God."<sup>2</sup>

Next, sin as an offense against God is seen as associated with the notion of law, as it is intimately connected with it, and there are several forms. One of these is eternal law. "The plan of divine wisdom directing all actions and movements in the whole universe, including physical laws and animal instincts, is called the eternal law, and it is the fount and origin of the order in the universe."<sup>3</sup> There is also another law of God which governs human beings--natural law--which is understood as "the participation and reflection in a rational creature of the eternal law of God, and therefore an expression in man of

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<sup>1</sup>George D. Smith (ed.), The Teaching of the Catholic Church (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960), II, 919.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 922.



the very essence of God."<sup>1</sup> This law is also known as the moral law, and pertains to the creation within man of certain well-defined tendencies which find expression in the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue. This law of man's being is called the natural law because it can be perceived by the light of reason alone, and because its precepts can be deduced by reason from the data of human nature. But, helpful though this natural moral law is to man, it is necessary for the majority of people to be taught further by God. This is the function of the Roman Catholic Church: to mediate divine grace through the sacraments, and to instruct the divine truths revealed to her to the people on behalf of God.

Therefore, the Catholic is taught by the Church his natural duties, and in matters of great moment and difficulty the teaching authority of the Church defines the moral obligations of the faithful. . . . That teaching imposed upon the whole Church is infallibly true, for it bears the stamp of divine authority.<sup>2</sup>

The Catholic concept of sin is to be understood in two divisions: original sin and actual sin. "Original sin" refers to the Genesis account of our first parents, Adam and Eve, when they disobeyed God's commandment in the Garden of Eden, or "Paradise."<sup>3</sup> In order to understand the full impact of this event, it is necessary to consider St. Augustine's description of the relationship experienced by

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 926.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 924.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, pp. 8-11.

### Adam and Eve with God prior to their transgressions:

Man lived in Paradise as he pleased, as long as his pleasure lay in what God had ordered. He lived in the enjoyment of God, the source of all the good there is in man. He lived free from want, and might have so lived for ever. Food was at hand, lest he should hunger; drink lest he should thirst; the tree of life, lest old age should undo him. His senses and feelings were undisturbed by bodily decay. He feared no disease from within, no assault from without. In his flesh was perfect health; in his soul, perfect peace. As Eden was unvisited by excess of heat or cold, so the will of him who dwelt there was untroubled by fear or greed. No sadness was his, no mere empty pleasure: a steady tide of unceasing joy flowed out to him from God whom he loved with the glowing love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith undimmed by falsehood or insincerity. Man and wife were there, one in mutual trust, one in honorable love, one in the guard they kept over mind and body, one in the easy service of obedience to God's command.<sup>1</sup>

But this blissful state did not last, for Adam and Eve subsequently fell from their "easy service" and disobeyed God's command. This act was the original sin.

The effects of this original sin were multiplied. For, as Adam was the first parent and representative of the human race, his action has had universal repercussion. Roman doctrine holds that everyone born of him in the ordinary course of nature, the Virgin Mary alone exempted, is from the first moment of existence in the state of sin. "Not that the child merely by being born is in the position of one who has committed actual sin, but that it begins its life in a condition brought about by the actual sin of

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<sup>1</sup>M. Sheehan, Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine, Part II (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, Ltd., 1954) p. 63.

Adam, and, therefore, contrary to the will of God."<sup>1</sup>

Yet the implications of this original sin are still more severe. For to Adam, living in the Paradise relationship described by St. Augustine, God had given unprecedented gifts, including

all those supernatural and preternatural endowments which were to fit him for his noble destiny. To his soul was given "sanctifying grace," a real spiritual quality that raised his nature, transforming it after the likeness of God, giving to it a real participation in the nature of God, enabling him to perform supernatural acts meritorious of his supernatural reward, making him an adopted son of God.<sup>2</sup>

These supernatural endowments were a "donum superadditum," or a super-added gift to man's natural human nature. But then Adam and Eve sinned, and thereby lost all the infused moral virtues and all the supernatural gifts with which they had been endowed. They "fell" back to their initial condition. "And now, with the rebellion of the spirit against God, there began at once in man the insubordination of flesh to spirit."<sup>3</sup> Adam and Eve began to feel the weaknesses inherent in human nature. Yet that was not all: the worst loss was yet to come.

But lamentable and painful as were the natural infirmities, they were as nothing compared with the loss of supernatural grace. In this was the great tragedy, in this essentially consisted the state of sin. With the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., I, 47. (Italics mine.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

loss of grace man was in a state of enmity with God. Destined for an end far in excess of his natural powers, he remained deprived of all supernatural gifts, totally incapable of attaining the object of his existence.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, natural man at birth is born in the state of original sin. And here is where the Roman doctrine of the Sacraments becomes operative. Peter Lombard (ca. 1150) explained that "a Sacrament is properly so called because it is the sign of the grace of God, and the expression of invisible grace, in such a way as to be not only its image, but its cause."<sup>2</sup> Hence, Sacraments give grace, and this grace is itself given only by God through the merits of Jesus Christ. As natural born man is at birth in the state of original sin, he is without grace, which is necessary for salvation. But when he receives the Sacrament of Baptism this is all changed, for man is cleansed from all stain of sin and born to a new spiritual life.

By the stain of sin we mean here both the guilt of sin and all the punishment, whether temporal or eternal, that is due to it. By being born to a new life we mean the reception of habitual Grace, the infused theological virtues, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. . . . Baptism destroys in us all the sin that defiled our souls. . . . Baptism exonerates us completely before God . . . and entitles us to eternal life.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem, then, that while the Roman Church sees the implications of original sin upon the unbaptized mortal to be enormous, the Sacrament of Baptism completely

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 748.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 774.

voids these ill effects. With its infused "Grace," Baptism adjusts the baptized toward God in a supernaturally perfect and complete relation of innocence and favor. But here the Roman doctrines appear to be inconsistent, for in treating of the whole concept of sin another theologian claims "we cannot examine the effects of sin without including among them the 'wounds' suffered by our human nature, primarily as a result of original sin."<sup>1</sup> It seems from this statement that Baptism is not as "complete" as previously described, or, at least, that the "wounds" of original sin have not healed. At any rate, even the baptized Catholic is susceptible to actual sin, which is recognized as falling into two categories.

The former, and more significant, of the two categories is "mortal sin," which is understood as "a free act of the will by which we discard the love of God and cease to be united to him as our sovereign good."<sup>2</sup> A French Roman theologian goes a step further to describe it as "an act by which man freely turns away from God, his ultimate end, to attach himself to a good created in a disorderly way."<sup>3</sup> The point is that in mortal sin man deliberately disobeys God's law by a free decision of his will, with all that such an action implies.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 933.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 929.

<sup>3</sup>Henri Rondet, Notes sur la Theologie du Peche (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1957), p. 103.

To disobey God's law is to show by one's actions that God's will and good pleasure are not the predominant motive of one's life. He who sins grievously implicitly declares: "I know that by this action I am forfeiting God's friendship; nevertheless I do it." What else is this than to prefer the creature to the Creator, one's own gratification to the express will of God, self-love to the love of God?<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, there is a twofold element in every mortal sin, namely, (1) the rejection of God, and (2) the adherence to creatures, or some form of self-gratification. These two elements coincide in one act of the human will. In this respect all mortal sins are alike. However, mortal sins differ in gravity as compared with one another. "The difference between one mortal sin and another can only turn on the degree and nature of the subversion of the moral order, on the variety of thought, word, or deed against the eternal law of God."<sup>2</sup> So it is possible for a Catholic willfully to forsake God in various ways, according to the manner in which he departs from divine law.

Basic to this whole understanding of mortal sin is, however, the fact that before any action can be considered as gravely sinful, it is necessary for the individual conscience to recognize that the action is morally wrong. Conscience is here considered as "a judgment of the mind, based on habitual knowledge, that an action is in conformity with the law of God or not."<sup>3</sup> Hence, for the

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, op. cit., II, 925.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 928.

individual to be held responsible for a sin, his conscious will must give consent. Conversely, if an individual does not know that a certain action is contrary to God's law, or if he has an abnormal mental condition, he will not be held responsible. In other words, ignorance of the law is an excuse. On the other hand, having committed a mortal sin, the conscious sinner is responsible for having offended, and so is liable to the eternal punishment of Hell.

The other category of actual sin is "venial sin," which is understood to bear a certain resemblance to, and yet to be vitally different from, mortal sin. They are similar in that both pertain to an offense against the law of God; yet, as the Baltimore Catechism explains, venial sins are only "a slight offense against the Law of God," which merely "lessen but do not deprive us of God's friendship."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, venial sins consist of the many minor offenses, forbidden indeed by God's law, but which do not so radically upset the established moral order as to make the attainment of man's last end impossible.

They offend God, but do not offend him to the extent of breaking off the union of charity existing between our souls and him; and since union with God is the end of our existence, they are not strictly against the law of God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Theodore Laetsch (ed.), The Abiding Word (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), II, 164.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 946.

This last statement seems to weaken the whole Roman position concerning the distinction between mortal and venial sins. It appears that their difference is only a matter of degree, and not of kind, which opens the discussion to much arbitrary and subjective consideration. This observation is substantiated by the French Jesuit, Henri Rondet, who comments on the possibility of a mortal sin becoming venial at the point of individual responsibility:

It is obvious first that a sin mortal by nature can become venial by absence of consciousness or consent or in reason of the circumstances which diminish responsibility. At the limit one reaches the acts where responsibility is so diminished that one must wonder if there still is a formal sin.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, while it is always possible that venial sins will lead to mortal sins, in themselves venial sins do not involve the loss of grace and eternal punishment. They receive their name from the Latin venia, meaning "pardon," for "any sin which does not merit eternal punishment is of its nature worthy of pardon, and the term 'venial' is properly applied to it."<sup>2</sup> Venial sins amount to somewhat of a handicap upon the sinner, as because of them he is retarded on his journey towards his ultimate end. It should be pointed out, however, that he is only retarded and not averted from this end, which is the case with mortal sins. This is so because, as the Council of Trent

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<sup>1</sup>Rondet, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 947.



put it:

For although, during this mortal life, men, no matter how holy and just they may be, fall daily into small sins, which are called venial, they do not thereby cease to be just.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident from this discussion that the Roman Church has an optimistic view of man's free will. As the Council of Trent puts it, "If anyone shall say, that . . . the free will of man is lost and extinguished; or, that it is a thing with a name only, yea, a title without a reality, . . . let him be anathema."<sup>2</sup> Behind this Church canon is the conviction of St. Augustine

that we keep the commandments if we will; but because the will is prepared by the Lord, we must ask of Him for such a force of will as suffices to make us act by willing. It is certain that it is we who will when we will, but it is He who makes us will what is good . . . it is He who makes us act, by supplying efficacious powers to our will.<sup>3</sup>

But, while man is considered to have free will, this freedom is itself dependent upon the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, as stated previously.<sup>4</sup> Or, as Robert H. Bonthius summarizes:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, trans. T. A. Buckley (London: George Routledge & Co., 1851), Session VI, Canon V.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, "On Grace and Free Will," in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. V, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1887), Chap. 32, xvi.

<sup>4</sup>Supra, p. 54.

To be sure, there is the deep recognition here of the indispensable need for divine grace every step of the way through life; but, God's grace presupposed--and it can be presupposed through faithful use of the Church's sacraments--progressive overcoming of destructive self-love is an earthly possibility. . . . Thus we may say only that Catholicism believes in the possibility of a high degree of self-harmonization in this life by means of the discipline of reason and the faithful use of the means of grace.<sup>1</sup>

This, then, is the Roman Catholic view of the doctrine of sin.

The Protestant understanding of the doctrine of sin is, in comparison with the above Roman teachings, of much broader scope. Whereas the Catholic Church tends to limit sin to the conscious and willing transgression of known law, the orthodox Protestant position generally sees sin as more of a permeating condition inherent in the whole of man.

Sin is a corruption of the nature of man, so that although by creation he was intended for fellowship with God and to reflect his nature ("in God's image") he now is not only unfit for that fellowship, apart from salvation, but without desire for it; indeed he is in practice (though perhaps not consciously always) in rebellion against God. Sin is not a series of wrong acts or careless omissions, but the root of all these. Sin is not ugly ornaments hung on a Christmas tree, which can be removed one by one; it is rather what makes a poison-bush produce poison-berries. It is "the way we are."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert H. Bonthius, Christian Paths to Self-Acceptance (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth J. Foreman, "Soteriology," in Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1955), II, 1049.

Although there are varieties of interpretation, Protestantism generally holds a doctrine of Original Sin, stemming from a "Fall" such as Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden.<sup>1</sup> But in contrast to the Catholic position which holds that in the "fall" man lost only his supernatural gifts, or "donum superadditum," so that his fall was merely a return to the condition he was in before receiving these extra gifts, many Protestants see larger implications. Instead of understanding original sin in only a negative context, amounting to the loss of "original justice" or "original righteousness," the Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church holds to a very positive position, stating, "This disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through baptism and the Holy Ghost."<sup>2</sup> While baptism removes the condemnation for original sin, it is not itself abolished, for, as Martin Luther comments:

Original sin, after regeneration, is like a wound that begins to heal; though it be a wound, yet it is in course of healing, though it still runs and is sore. So original sin remains in Christians until they die, yet itself is mortified and continually dying. Its head is crushed to pieces, so that it cannot condemn us.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 8-11.

<sup>2</sup>"Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas S. Kepler (ed.), The Table Talk of Martin Luther (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1952), pp. 157f. (*Italics mine.*)

Remaining in baptized Christians, "original sin (peccatum originale) is the concupiscence filling the whole man which is the root of all peccata actualia," or "actual sins."<sup>1</sup> Further, sinful man's will itself is in bondage in his hope of moving towards God: "They who lie in sins are unfree and prisoners of the devil."<sup>2</sup> Hence, it is God who takes the initiative in their relationship, through the Holy Spirit. Man only has free will in matters of his earthly material life.

John Calvin, the father of the Reformed Church, sees original sin as resulting from the disobedience of Adam. He defines it as "the hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature," so that the whole man is depraved: "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, not a

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<sup>1</sup>Reinhold Seeberg, Text-book of the History of Doctrine (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1954), II, 229. It should be noted that differences of interpretation of the term "concupiscence," pertaining to the doctrine of original sin, caused much debate between the Roman Catholic Church and sixteenth century reformers. It is not within the purview of this study to treat of this debate other than to state that Luther, following St. Augustine, understood "concupiscence" as a real sin, manifested in lust or evil desire, which remains to man after the guilt of original sin has been removed by baptism. ("Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord, p. 31). In contrast, the Roman Church holds that "concupiscence" is not actually sin in regenerate man, although it proceeds from sin and inclines to sin. St. Thomas Aquinas defined it as "the deprivation of integrity" which is one of the complementary results of original sin (Smith, op. cit., p. 346).

<sup>2</sup>Hugh T. Kern, Jr. (ed.), A Compend of Luther's Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 91.

spark of good can be found."<sup>1</sup> In this totally depraved condition, the natural freedom of the will yet remains, but "not as though it had an equally free choice of good and evil, but because it commits evil by free will and not from coercion."<sup>2</sup> At the same time it must be emphasized that, as William E. Hulme declares:

The concept of total depravity is often misunderstood. It does not mean that man has fully committed himself to evil, for this would place him beyond redemption (as typified in the devil). Rather it means that there is nothing within man that can redeem him from his slavery to sin. Yet the very fact that he is called a slave implies that he may not be satisfied with his status. In the midst of his evil man is in conflict over it.<sup>3</sup>

Calvin, accordingly, agrees in principle with Luther's concept of the bondage of the will.

The Arminian position concerning original sin, which is held by the Methodist Church, as well as by many Congregationalists and Presbyterians, is that

The effect of Adam's sin upon the moral state of mankind is in accordance with and by virtue of the natural law of heredity. The race inherited proneness to sin. But this proneness to sin does not imply guilt, inasmuch as punishment can justly be inflicted only on account of actual sin, which consists in voluntary

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<sup>1</sup>Seeberg, op. cit., p. 399.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. For a discussion of the problem of evil in relation to original sin, see J. S. Whale, The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1936).

<sup>3</sup>William E. Hulme, Counseling and Theology (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), pp. 107f.

transgression.<sup>1</sup>

This is the position which Bonthius describes as being "meliorist," in that:

In this view man is not a fallen creature but one who needs to rise and whose failure to rise is sin. He is not an originally sinful being although he is at all times bound to some extent by habits of adjustment adapted in earlier stages of his personality growth but unsuited to new adaptations. Characteristic of Christian meliorism . . . is the emphasis upon the idea that man's whole sensual nature is capable of noble sublimation.<sup>2</sup>

This "noble sublimation" assumes a high degree of confidence in the individual's own abilities to seek, find, and do that which is best for himself. His rational powers are effective, and his will is not "in bondage" (Luther), or "depraved" (Calvin), but "the doctrine of freedom presupposed by meliorism is substantially the same as the Catholic doctrine."<sup>3</sup> As such, Arminianism carries the conviction of the reality of God's grace with man, working unconsciously within him for his salvation, and the importance of conscious human response and cooperation (as in Catholicism) with this grace.

Consequently, Protestantism understands sin not so much in terms of individual sinful acts, but rather in view of the nature of man himself. There are no generally

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), p. 1028.

<sup>2</sup>Bonthius, op. cit., pp. 81f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

accepted categories of sins, as in the Roman Church, although at least one Protestant publication sets forth a thirteen-point "Classification of Actual Sins."<sup>1</sup> The main thrust, however, is to view sin in terms of the cry, "Woe is me, I am undone, not alone because I have sinned, but because I--the I which was born when I was born--I am a sinful man."<sup>2</sup> John S. Whale holds to the individual nature of sin, yet also sees a deeper dimension borne out of the inter-relatedness of mankind:

The word "sin" has an individual reference, plainly enough: it is always a conscious and responsible act of will on the part of an individual. Yet this cannot be an exhaustive definition of it. Sin is also a state or condition of sinfulness mysteriously constitutive of our empirical make-up. It is never a man's private affair. Your failure matches mine and our lives interlock to form an organic system of evil. Indeed, St. Augustine used the words "sinful mass" (massa peccatrix) to describe this solidary aspect of human sin. Schleiermacher, too, described it as "in each the work of all: in all the work of each." Dostoevsky reminds us that the solidarity of the race is a fact and, in view of the reality of sin, a terrible fact; "we are each responsible for all."<sup>3</sup>

Concerning this basic state or condition of man's nature, in which each man is involved, Reinhold Niebuhr comments:

Since Augustine it has been the consistent view of Christian orthodoxy that the basic sin of man was his

<sup>1</sup>Laetsch, op. cit., pp. 160-170.

<sup>2</sup>Alvin N. Rogness, "Preaching the Law," The Lutheran Quarterly, VII, No. 4 (November, 1955), 328.

<sup>3</sup>J. S. Whale, Christian Doctrine (London: Fontana Books, 1961), p. 44.

pride. . . . The basic sin of pride does not mean some conscious bit of exaggerated self-esteem, but the general inclination of all men to overestimate their virtues, powers, and achievements. Augustine defined sin as the "perverse desire of height," or as man's regarding himself as his own end, instead of realizing that he is but part of a total scheme of means and ends.<sup>1</sup>

Continuing the discussion of sin as pride, Whale sees such pride as finally rebelling against God and repudiating his purpose.

Its active manifestation is self-love which "changes the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of the corruptible man." The freedom of the filial spirit, man's freedom for God and in God, is perverted to mean freedom from God. Imago dei is interpreted to mean "ye shall be as gods." It is interesting and significant that in his last book the well-known psychologist Jung should describe man's proud trust in himself as "his Godalmightiness."<sup>2</sup>

Martin Luther also considered pride as definitely involved in sin, yet he tended to see such pride as only symptomatic of man's rebellious inner attitude in relationship to God. That is to say, Luther tended to recognize that man's pride may not be his "basic sin" (as Niebuhr states above), and also that self-love is not necessarily the "active manifestation" of pride (as Whale suggests above).<sup>3</sup> Rather, pride may actually be a defense against

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<sup>1</sup>Niebuhr, "Sin," in A Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>Whale, op. cit., pp. 42f.

<sup>3</sup>In this connection Erich Fromm states, "While on the surface it seems that these narcissistic persons are very much in love with themselves, they actually are not fond of themselves, and their narcissism--like selfishness--is an overcompensation for the basic lack of self-love,"



deep feelings of self-hatred, especially as man realizes his estranged relationship with God. Consequently, on a deeper level than pride, Luther saw the essence of sin as consisting of "'blindness and wickedness,' 'the despising of God, inborn, inward impurity of heart, the disobeying of God's will,' . . . but above all, in unbelief, as the 'real chief sin' and 'cause of all sin and crime.'"<sup>1</sup> While it is meaningful to see unbelief as involved in sin, in the opinion of this writer unbelief alone conveys a too negative emphasis which does violence to the full dynamic meaning of sin. Therefore it is most helpful to regard sin (unbelief) as the negative aspect of a polarity relationship, at the other end of which is the positive aspect of faith. But in doing this, faith itself must be understood in a dynamic sense. That is, faith cannot be understood as referring to merely intellectual acceptance of certain statements about God; rather faith must be conceived as the experiencing of a vital and life-giving relationship of loving trust and confidence within the fellowship of the believer and God. It is the dynamic of this relationship which justifies the consideration of both sin and faith as in polarity, and as essentially religious concepts. In this structure the writer is following the thought of Gustaf Aulen, who

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Escape from Freedom (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1941), p. 116.

<sup>1</sup> Seeberg, op. cit., p. 243.

illustrates this polarity by explaining sin in that, "If the fundamental religious relationship according to the Christian faith is fellowship with God, it follows that the essence of sin is everything that breaks and hinders this fellowship and causes a separation between man and God."<sup>1</sup> In other words, if faith is fellowship between man and God, or a positive relationship, then sin is that which separates them, resulting in a negative relationship. It is in this sense that sin is "unbelief."

Further, "if faith means to live under the dominion of God, then sin as unbelief means that God does not have dominion, and that something else than God's loving will exercises this dominion."<sup>2</sup> It is this "something else" which separates, and consequently, which is sin. Also, it is this "something else" which, to this writer, greatly broadens the force of sin. For it lifts the meaning of sin out of the usual categories which tend to restrict it to mere morality alone (e.g., drinking, dancing, smoking, gambling, etc.), and, while it does not deny such categories, it enlarges the content of possible sin to include anything which might come between, or cause separation between, man and God. The result is that anything which might "have dominion" in the life of the individual, at the

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<sup>1</sup>Aulen, op. cit., p. 262.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

expense of God's prior claim upon him--whether this anything be a man's job, his car, his TV set, or even his family--would, for him, be sin.

Yet at the root of this depth understanding of sin is man himself in his rebellious state, or, as Augustine has pointed out, in his pride. It is this pride which sets the creature in opposition to his Creator. His pride, or own selfish ego, can capture dominion of his life, in a powerful inward-moving spiral of egocentricity. As Aulen puts it:

The other power which rules man in sin is nothing else than his own ego. Indifference or hostility to the divine will (the former must be emphasized as well as the latter) is eo ipso egocentricity. When the divine will does not rule, man is, as Luther says, incurvatus in se, selfishly directed toward himself.<sup>1</sup>

This egocentricity is, again, in polarity to the humility which the creature should rightly feel in relationship to the Creator. Hence, egocentricity itself becomes the "something else" which rules man and occasions his defiance of God.

It must be emphasized that understanding sin as "egocentricity" is not in contradiction to, or even a different form of, understanding sin as "unbelief." Rather, "egocentricity" can best be understood as the positive side of sin, while "unbelief" is the negative side.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

Sin as unbelief and sin as egocentricity are one and the same thing seen from different points of view. Egocentricity is opposition to the divine will, and therefore "unbelief." Wherever this power rules, the fellowship with God is destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

It is this definition of sin as described by the twin sides of "unbelief" and "egocentricity" which is accepted by this writer for understanding the doctrine of sin in this study. It is felt that this definition rightly unfolds the dynamic dimensions of the concept of sin, while remaining true to both its biblical and ecclesiastical heritage. It enlarges the scope of sin from the transgression of morality to the foundational relationship between man and God. As such, it provides the framework for understanding the confession of sin as the pathway from rebellion to reconciliation.

### The Doctrine of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the act by which God brings sinful man into a right relationship to Himself. It is an act of grace, that is, of undeserved favor, on the basis of the work of God in Jesus Christ, and is offered to the repentant sinner who trusts God's word of promise.<sup>2</sup>

This is a capsule definition of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. However, there are distinctive differences in the interpretation and mediation of this doctrine. This is especially evident as concerns the Roman Catholic Church's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>2</sup>Warren A. Quanbeck, "Forgiveness," in A Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 137.

Sacrament of Penance and the Reformation understanding of Justification by Faith. But before treating these distinctions, it is helpful to consider their common heritage in the life of the early Christian Church.

The Christians in the first century A.D. lived in an atmosphere of daily expectancy of the Parousia, or Christ's Second Coming. When this did not take place, it required a re-thinking and new formation of their basic doctrines.<sup>1</sup> This was especially true as concerned church discipline. For, with expanding numbers of Christians, there were increasing problems as to how to deal with serious misdemeanors by those already baptized who had ostensibly earnestly repented and renounced sin. There was much hesitation by church leaders about re-admitting to their fellowship those who had committed grave sins, especially idolatry, unchastity and shedding of blood. But opinion varied.

Tertullian, writing shortly before 200, and Origen (d. 253) are numbered among the rigorous disciplinarians, while Hermes (ca. 125) permits the restoration of an apostate and an adulteress, and Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200) represents the Apostle John as pardoning a repentant bandit.<sup>2</sup>

The baptism of John the Baptist required a

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed exposition of the historical development of this doctrinal formation, see Martin Werner, The Formation of Christian Dogma (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957).

<sup>2</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 89. (Italics mine.)

confession of sins, as previously stated.<sup>1</sup> The stem word of this confession is the Greek verb, ἐξομολογέω, exomologeō, meaning, "I confess, admit, acknowledge," from which comes the comprehensive form, exomologesis, or "confession." But the understanding of this confession broadened with later usage. As John T. McNeill explains:

When it had for its object "sins" it bears the simple meaning of a full confession: Thus John the Baptist's converts "were baptized in the river Jordan confessing (exomologoumenoi) their sins" (Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:9) and James enjoins: "Confess your sins to one another" (James 5:16). But the application of exomologesis was early extended to cover overt acts of humiliation so dramatic and arresting as to "speak louder than words." The noun was taken over from the Greek by the Latin fathers, and used to signify both confession and penalty.<sup>2</sup>

With the passage of time the doctrine of forgiveness expanded to include those guilty of post-baptismal sins, and with it the practice of confession itself took on a much broader character as church discipline expanded.

Before the middle of the second century confession was a part of the Sunday services; whether this was a "general confession" or a personal confessing to one another as in James 5:16, is not indicated. In the Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, ca. 150) we read: "In church thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and thou shalt not betake thyself to prayer with an evil conscience. . . . On the Lord's day gather yourselves together and give thanks, having first confessed your transgressions. . . . (Did. iv, 14; xiv, 1) Irenaeus some decades later tells of a deacon's wife who, having been victimized "in mind and body" by a magician, and rescued from him, "spent her whole time in the exercise of confession (exomologesis) weeping over and lamenting the defilement she had undergone."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 25.    <sup>2</sup>McNeill, op. cit., pp. 90f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

All of this early confession was evidently done in public, with the confession of sins made to God, but before men. There was to be an unreserved and complete exposure, which Tertullian, Origen, and Ambrose seem to demand.

Origen states: "For sins of every kind are to be confessed and everything we do is to be made public. If we do anything secretly, if we commit any sin in word alone, or in the secret of our thoughts, all must be published, all brought to light."<sup>1</sup> But Origen also saw great value in private confession, and, according to Charles F. Kemp, he held that it was one of the responsibilities of the clergy to decide whether or not public confession was necessary.

He urged the people to "look about thee carefully for the person to whom thou shouldest confess thy sin. First make sure of the physician to whom thou shouldest lay bare the cause of thine ailment, who knows how to be infirm with the infirm, to weep with those who weep, --so that in fine if he shall have given any counsel thou wilt act upon it and wilt follow it: if he have understood and forseen that thine ailment is such as needs to be exposed and to be cured in the gathering of the whole church from which it may be that others too, can be edified and thou thyself readily healed, this will have to be arranged with much deliberation and the experienced counsel of that physician."<sup>2</sup>

It appears evident from this quotation that Origen carried over the early concept of the priest-physician in his thinking.<sup>3</sup> Also, he displays an awareness of the value of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>Kemp, op. cit., p. 27. (Italics mine.)

<sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 38.

empathy so that the confessor will know how "to be infirm with the infirm, to weep with those who weep."

By the time of the fourth century there are more general indications that private confession began to replace public exposure. Augustine permitted the avoidance of public confession for secret or non-scandalous sins, and Ambrose of Milan had high regard for private confession, too. He was evidently a sensitive and empathetic man in protecting privacy, for, as McNeill informs, "The Life of St. Ambrose (d. 397) by Paulinus states that he wept with penitents when they confessed to him, and 'never revealed to any but the Lord' what had been confided."<sup>1</sup> A more authoritative opinion for church discipline came from the pen of Pope Leo I, who occupied the papal throne from 440 to 461:

In the fifth century Pope Leo the Great wrote a letter to some bishop in which he made the statement that it was sufficient that confessions be made to priests in secret. He did not forbid public confession but merely stated that a public enumeration of sins was not necessary, and that it should be made first to God and then to the bishop. . . . He warned against a custom of that day of deferring one's conversion to his death-bed when he might not be able to confess and obtain absolution.<sup>2</sup>

However, in ascertaining the influence of Pope Leo, McNeill's warning must be kept in view: "Authorization of secret confession has been attributed to Pope Leo the Great

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<sup>1</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Kemp, op. cit., pp. 27f.



(440-461), but his leadership in this direction is easily overstated."<sup>1</sup> For instance, it is probable that in monasticism, even prior to Leo, private confession had been formalized. One of these early monastic leaders, St. Basil of Caesarea (d. 379), "says that no one should keep secret, or declare incautiously, any agitation of his soul, but confess it to 'trustworthy brethren' who are charged with sympathetic direction of the weak."<sup>2</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that this whole development of confession came within the framework of church discipline in the first centuries of the Christian era with specific regard to the problem of dealing with those believers who had lapsed into sin following their baptism. It was initially held that these fallen ones would be given only one more chance, although there were differences of opinion. A realistic position was taken by Cyprian (d. 258) who "sought to restrain the clergy who had been too hasty in readmitting the lapsed, but he permitted the prompt restoration of the dying. Finally, those who from the first lapse had been lamenting their weakness were admitted 'under compulsion of necessity.'"<sup>3</sup> Other plans arose in Asia Minor in which the lapsed are advanced through four grades, or classes, prior to readmission into

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<sup>1</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 98.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

full church membership. As Henry Charles Lea explains:

These in their perfected form were devised to symbolize the gradual readmission of the sinner to the church which had expelled him, and were modeled on those through which converts advanced to baptism. The first was fletus, or weeping, in which he stood outside the church, lamenting his sins and begging the prayers of the faithful as they entered; the second was auditio, or hearing, when he was admitted to the porch among the catechumens and heard the sermon, but went out before the prayers; the third was substratio, lying down or kneeling during the prayers uttered for his benefit; the fourth was consistentia or congregatio, in which he remained with the faithful during the mysteries but was not allowed to partake; and after this stage had been duly performed he was finally admitted to the Eucharist after the ceremony of reconciliation by the episcopal imposition of hands.<sup>1</sup>

However, none of the Church Fathers of the third century "authorized the repetition of the exomologesis; they are aware that this is sometimes asked for, but they allude only unfavorably to those who would permit it."<sup>2</sup> A further development came in about the sixth century with the appearance of Penitential books, which reveal much about the nature and practice of early confession.

They were handbooks prepared for the guidance of priests and bishops in caring for souls. . . . They were an important factor in the transformation of confession from a public to a private act. . . . Many of the Penitentials contained a detailed series of questions that were to be asked and answered by the confessant. . . . The Penitentials were mainly correctional. Most of them sought to cure by what they termed the principle of contraries, which was that each fault must

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Charles Lea, A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church (Philadelphia: Lea Brothers & Co., 1896), I, 24f.

<sup>2</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 93.

be replaced by corresponding virtues. . . . The penalties demanded in the Penitentials were of varied nature, some of them being very severe. . . . The Penitentials have frequently been criticized for having an unhealthy moral taint and leaving the way open for later abuses by lax confessors. Yet at the same time, in spite of all this, their main objective, as McNeill points out in his thorough study of the Medieval Books of Penance, was the reconstruction of personality. It was their desire to aid in the recovery of spiritual health which had been lost by sin. . . . There can be no question of the profound influence that these Penitentials had in shaping the practice of the confessional.<sup>1</sup>

In consequence of this situation, McNeill rightly describes subsequent developments when he comments:

One of the most remarkable transformations in the history of Church discipline is the gradual admission, leading ultimately to the requirement, of the frequent penance which had long been earnestly rejected. . . . The obligation of frequently repeated acts of confession and penance, together with the vastly enlarged range of sins confessed, doubly enhanced the importance of the penitential discipline in the Church, both in the life of the lay people, and in the functions of the clergy.<sup>2</sup>

It is beyond the province of this study to enlarge upon the detailed history of the development of confession, which has been fully treated elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Suffice it to say that the Council of Liege, which met in 710, decreed that everyone should make confession once a year to his parish priest. The Lateran Council which met in 1215 confirmed

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<sup>1</sup>Kemp, op. cit., pp. 28-31.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 93f.

<sup>3</sup>The most complete account of the historical development of the concept of confession known to this writer is the three-volume work by Lea, op. cit. While it is relatively old (1896), it is well documented and considered to be authoritative.

what by that time had become an established custom, demanding

that confession be made once a year, that penance be faithfully performed and that the priest in the manner of the skilled physician must be faithful, diligent and cautious in the carrying out of this office, fitting the manner of advice to the needs of the penitent and must not in any manner reveal what he has learned in the confessional under penalty of being deposed and doing perpetual penance in a monastery.<sup>1</sup>

These decrees had definite implications for the Sacrament of Penance of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Penance is one of its seven recognized sacraments.<sup>2</sup> As a sacrament it affords grace.<sup>3</sup> It is designed to confer grace for the remission of sins within the understanding of the doctrine of forgiveness. The Roman Church holds that Jesus Christ instituted Penance for the remission of sins, which are crimes in themselves, and which therefore require a judicial decision. Hence, the Sacrament of Penance is a judgment, necessitating an inquiry into the sins to be remitted. This inquiry takes place in confession.

Robert H. Bonthius has described the Roman Catholic Church as being essentially "forensic" in character.<sup>4</sup> This is so because of the courtroom methods understood for guiding man. "God is conceived of rather juridically as the

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<sup>1</sup>Kemp, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>The six other sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, The Eucharist, Marriage, Ordination, and Extreme Unction.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 57. <sup>4</sup>Bonthius, op. cit., p. 41.

Supreme Lawgiver. Sin is thought of in terms of disobedience and broken law. Salvation tends to be regarded as a pardoning and rewarding."<sup>1</sup> Further, the Roman Church claims that it is the lone mediator of salvation between man and God, with its priests as the main functionaries. The forensic character is further evident when sin is seen as a crime, with Penance involving a judgment, and a subsequent penalty. Penance is, therefore, a means by which man renders his debt to God.

The Roman Church claims its authority to judge sinners as based in scripture. Peter, the first Pope, received "the power of the keys" in Matthew 16:19. Peter then gave this authority to the Apostles in John 20:21-23, and, therefore, to the Roman Church, which is the only true Church. Further:

Our Lord gave his Church wide discretionary powers, so that she can impose her obligations or remit them, and her action will be ratified by God; in particular, she can forgive sins, or refuse to forgive; her authority in this matter is to be exercised judicially; this involves voluntary avowal of guilt, of sorrow, and of readiness to atone, on the part of the penitent; there is no limitation to this power, granted that the penitent is in the requisite condition; it is given not to the Apostles alone, but also to their successors; only the officials of the church, the priests, are able to exercise it; finally, subjection to the church's tribunal is necessary for a sinful Christian who desires pardon.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that in attempting to justify the Sacrament of Penance by tracing its historical

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 40.    <sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 957.

roots in early Christianity the Roman Church honestly admits that "references to the Sacrament are so vague and so comparatively rare that some misguided scholars have denied its Apostolic origin."<sup>1</sup> Further, while Catholic authorities grant that public confession was the general practice of the early church, they claim "secret sacramental confession 'has always been commended' with 'unanimous agreement' by the ancient fathers,"--yet noted historian John T. McNeill refutes this contention in declaring, "Our examination of the ancient practice has led us to conclusions entirely at variance with this."<sup>2</sup>

At any rate, Penance is the Roman sacrament necessary for salvation for those who have sinned after baptism, even as baptism is itself necessary for those not yet regenerated. Accordingly, Penance has three aspects: Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction. Contrition means the loathing of past sin and the honest intention to abandon it. This may also be called "Perfect Contrition," in that "we grieve for our sins because they are hateful to One who is Himself infinitely lovable and whom we love above all things for His own sake."<sup>3</sup> This is the first and most necessary condition for the forgiveness of sin. Theoretically, this Perfect Contrition immediately reconciles

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 962f.    <sup>2</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>Sheehan, op. cit., p. 217.

the sinner to God because it contains the desire for Penance, and so cleanses from sin. The Catholic Church also recognizes "Imperfect Contrition," called Attrition, which is a lower form of contrition. Attrition "springs from any supernatural motive lower than that of perfect Charity, e.g., the filth and horror of sin, the loss of eternal happiness, or the pains of Hell."<sup>1</sup> Attrition is also adequate for the purpose of Penance, and, like contrition, must be inspired by grace, for without grace man can do nothing towards eternal life.

The second matter in Penance is Confession, which is

the declaration of our sins to the priest, in order to obtain forgiveness. When we have mortal sins to confess, our confession must, as far as memory serves, be complete, specific and numerical. (1) Complete, i.e., all grave post-baptismal sins, not already mentioned in a good confession, must be told. (2) Specific, i.e., the precise nature of the sin must be stated: it would not suffice, e.g., to confess a sin against one's neighbor without explaining how exactly he had been injured, whether in person, property, or good name. (3) Numerical, i.e., the number of times each grave sin has been committed must be given.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for confession, in relation to contrition, was set forth by the Council of Trent in 1564, and, as McNeill points out:

Pastors are to excite people to contrition, and admonish them to examine their consciences. Few attain to contrition so completely as to blot out sins; therefore the Lord provides "easier means" of salvation through the use of the keys of the church. Confession is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 218.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

succinctly defined as "a sacramental accusation of one's sins, made to obtain pardon by virtue of the keys." As no one can enter a place without the help of him who has the keys, "so no one is admitted to heaven unless its gates be unlocked by the priests to whose custody the Lord gave the keys."<sup>1</sup>

As concerns the age for confession, its frequency, and further mechanics, McNeill continues:

Children at the age "when they are able to discern good from evil, and are capable of malice" are bound to go to confession. The "once a year" requirement of Innocent III is supplemented for the cases of danger of death, of receiving the sacrament, and of "apprehension of forgetting some sin" that must be confessed if pardon is to follow. Frequent confession is urged on the analogy of physical cleanliness. Sins forgotten in confession should be promptly confessed when they come to memory. All the circumstances that aggravate or extenuate sins are to be revealed in confessing them. . . . "Secrecy as regards confession should be strictly observed, as well by the penitent as by the priest. Hence no one can, on any account, confess by messenger or letter."<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that mortal sins alone positively require confession--that is, venial sins need not be confessed, as they do not occasion the loss of "sanctifying grace." The point is (and this is one of the really forced, legalistic, and artificial features of the Roman doctrine) that

some sin must be mentioned if the Sacrament is to be conferred. Hence a penitent who wishes to secure an increase of grace by keeping his regular confession, but who has committed no sin that he can remember since his last confession, must repeat in general terms some sin of his past already forgiven. Material integrity,

<sup>1</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 289. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



however, is not essential.<sup>1</sup>

Such mechanical confession of already forgiven sins merely for the effect of gaining additional grace substantiates the dissertation finding of Manning Eugene Van Nostrand that "the values of the Sacrament of Penance are quite thoroughly sacramental, and only incidentally therapeutic."<sup>2</sup> This is also known as "Devotional Confession," and "Optional Confession." In such activity the synergism of Romanism, or the idea of man's ability to cooperate with God to accomplish his own salvation, is evident. This is true of the whole Roman Sacramental system (i.e., the seven sacraments), but Penance is especially concerned with the remission of sin. One Catholic Catechism plainly states: "We can free ourselves from venial sin at any time by acts of charity or sorrow, or by acts of the particular virtue in which we have failed, but we can do so with greater profit in the Sacrament of Penance."<sup>3</sup>

Following confession the Roman Catholic high view of the authority of the priest is affirmed in his words of absolution, "I absolve thee," which signify that remission of sins is effected by the administration of this Sacrament.

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 976. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Van Nostrand, op. cit., Abstract, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Sheehan, op. cit., p. 223. (Italics mine.)

The third, and last, part of the Sacrament of Penance is Satisfaction, which is the penitent's voluntary acceptance of the penance, or penalty imposed by the priest. Originally these penalties were very severe, but "there has been a practical development towards lenience, and today, as all Catholics know, the penances given are very slight."<sup>1</sup> Early penances often consisted of prayer, fasting and almsdeeds, although present practices generally call for prayer alone, as in repeated recitals of the Roman Rosary. An example of this, along with its serious nature, is the statement in a Catholic Catechism that "a severe penance, e.g., five decades of the Rosary, if imposed for mortal sin, is of grave obligation."<sup>2</sup> "The object of this penance is to discharge (in part at least) the debt of temporal punishment that often remains after sin has been remitted."<sup>3</sup> It should also be pointed out, however, that the actual performance of the penance imposed is not necessary for the validity of the Sacrament; it is sufficient that at the time of the absolution the will to do the penance be present. But the performance of the penance is an integral part of the Sacrament, and therefore any penitent who culpably omitted it would commit a sin.<sup>4</sup>

This whole matter of Satisfaction appears to be a further example of Roman "works-righteousness." The

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 976.

<sup>2</sup>Sheehan, op. cit., p. 216.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 976. (Italics mine.)

penances of Satisfaction provide another means by which man may himself atone for his misdeeds. The declining severity of penance, as noted above, makes such satisfaction increasingly hollow, even to the point of being "not necessary" at all! It is even admitted that "as modern penances are so slight, it is desirable that penitents should increase their value by earnestness in their accomplishment, by other works, and by gaining indulgences."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, then, the Roman Catholic dogma concerning the doctrine of forgiveness consists in the Sacramental system, with special reference to the Sacrament of Penance for the remission of sins.

The concept of Justification by Faith is generally associated with the Protestant Churches of the Reformation, in contrast to the above Roman position concerning the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. (Italics mine.) It is considered beyond the scope of this study to treat of the Roman Catholic dogma concerning Indulgences. Suffice it to say that "an Indulgence is a remission, granted by the Church, of a temporal punishment which often remains due to sin after its guilt has been forgiven" (Smith, op. cit., p. 976). Indulgences are obtained from a "spiritual treasury" which results from the virtues of previous saints who "have often made satisfaction in excess of what they require to atone for their own sins." Indulgences are of two kinds: plenary and partial. "A plenary indulgence remits all the penalty still due to forgiven sin. Partial indulgences . . . remit as much of the temporal punishment due to sin as would have been remitted by the penalty mentioned in the concession. It is futile to ask how much of the temporary penalty is therefore remitted: we cannot say definitely" (ibid., p. 980). For further discussion see Paul Anciaux, "The Meaning of Indulgences," Theology Digest, VII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1959), 160-164.

doctrine of forgiveness. However, this concept was in evidence long before the sixteenth century. As Henry Charles Lea discloses:

As early as the Shepherd of Hermas we find the doctrine that the elect of God are saved through faith, and in the middle of the fourth century this is amplified by St. Hilary of Poitiers who asserts that faith is the only means of justification; no one can remit sins but God, therefore all remission is from him; even the repentance which is a condition precedent to pardon is a gift from heaven: it is not the reward of merit but a free and spontaneous pardon.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical basis for this concept finds its clearest expression in the writings of the Apostle Paul, and especially in such passages as Romans 3:23-25 and Romans 5:8, 9. Paul's thought was perceived by many subsequent theologians, as noted, but, as T. A. Kantonen affirms, "The Pauline doctrine found its most adequate theological interpreter fifteen centuries later in Martin Luther."<sup>2</sup> For Luther was The Reformer.

Martin Luther was born November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany. As a devout Catholic he eventually entered an Augustinian monastery and studied the accepted Roman Catholic theology. In the cloister he was a conscientious academic scholar, but even more conscientious concerning his personal spiritual welfare. He observed the Catholic rites concerning Penance, yet could find no

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<sup>1</sup> Lea, op. cit., pp. 93f. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup> Taito Almar Kantonen, Resurgence of the Gospel (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 47.

assurance of his own salvation, even with the most exacting introspection. As Erik Erikson describes Luther's predicament:

In confession, for example, he was so meticulous in the attempt to be truthful that he spelled out every intention as well as every deed; he splintered relatively acceptable purities into smaller and smaller impurities; he reported temptations in historical sequence, starting back in childhood; and after having confessed for hours, would ask for special appointments in order to correct previous statements.<sup>1</sup>

Erikson describes this behavior of Luther as being "obviously both exceedingly compulsive and, at least unconsciously, rebellious," which would seem to be borne out in that "his preceptor threatened to punish him for obstruction of confession."<sup>2</sup> But the point is that the Roman means for mediating forgiveness did not afford lasting relief to his sensitive personality.

He found it impossible to decide whether the reassurance gained from it was really a godly feeling or not; or whether anybody could really differentiate penitential attrition--the mere fear of punishment--from contrition, that complete penitence which culminated in a true love for God the judge, and mankind. . . . He forced himself either to find a new avenue toward faith or to fail.<sup>3</sup>

And "find a new avenue toward faith" he did, or at least he resurrected a long buried biblical truth. For in his personal anguish he turned to the Bible, and, as Roland

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<sup>1</sup>Erik H. Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1958), pp. 155f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 157. (*Italics mine.*)

Bainton quotes Luther's own words:

I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "the justice of God," because I took it to mean the justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "The just shall live by faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.<sup>1</sup>

The passage of Paul to which Luther makes reference above is Romans 1:17. Concerning the word "justice" in this context Bainton comments:

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<sup>1</sup>Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 65. It should be noted that E. G. Schwiebert, in his fine work Luther and His Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 285ff., presents this quotation from Luther in somewhat fuller translation than does Bainton. A comparison of the two texts reveals that the word translated as "justice" by Bainton is more often rendered as "righteousness" by Schwiebert. This same discrepancy exists between the King James and Revised Standard versions of the Bible in their respective readings of Romans 1:17. The King James text is, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" while the Revised Standard reads, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" (*Italics mine.*) This variation is not considered to affect Luther's understanding of Justification by Faith.

In the Greek of the Pauline Epistles the word "justice" has a double sense, rendered in English by "justice" and "justification." The former is a strict enforcement of the law, as when a judge pronounces the appropriate sentence. Justification is a process of the sort which sometimes takes place if the judge suspends the sentence, places the sinner on parole, expresses confidence and personal interest in him, and thereby instills such resolve that the man is reclaimed and justice itself ultimately better conserved than by the exaction of a pound of flesh. . . . God does not condition his forgiveness upon the expectation of future fulfillment and man is not put right with God by any achievement, whether present or foreseen. On man's side the one requisite is faith, which means belief that God was in Christ seeking to save; trust that God will keep his promises; and commitment to his will and way. Faith is not an achievement. It is a gift.<sup>1</sup>

And because such faith is a gift, coming without any merit or achievement on man's part, Luther held that it was "imputed" to man through God's grace alone. This was far different from the prevailing Roman position, for "very early in ancient Catholicism justifying grace becomes limited and channelized through identification with baptismal grace, the maintenance of which is thought to require merits and good works."<sup>2</sup> Hence, Frederick A. Norwood tends to oversimplify when, in commenting on the phrase "justification by faith alone," he states, "Luther added the last word just to be quite clear about it."<sup>3</sup> The point is that Luther wanted to emphasize the supreme fact of God's gift

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 64f. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Kantonen, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Frederick A. Norwood, The Development of Modern Christianity (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 42.

of grace in contrast to man's works. Accordingly, he "never wearied of assailing every form of work-righteousness and all claims to human merit."<sup>1</sup> Luther held that the faith which God awakens in man effects a real inward righteousness, which, however, is by its very nature subject to a process of development which is never completed in this life. For this reason Luther talks about man as being "simul iustus et peccator," or being both justified and sinner at the same time.

The "simul iustus et peccator" idea is specifically developed in Luther's Lectures on Romans. Before the Gospel comes to us, he tells us, we are "totus caro," in complete carnal peace and indifference. The Gospel is the good news of grace, but its effect is to bring about a conflict between flesh and spirit, the old man and the new man. Since "flesh" stands for our whole self-centered nature, we cannot get rid of ourselves and fulfill the law of God. The fact that we are not satisfied with being sinners saved by grace alone but seek to gain merit by fulfilling the Law shows our natural pride. When we do accept God's Grace we are freed from the Law and from God's wrath and judgment. The believer is iustus, as distinguished from peccator, spiritus as distinguished from caro. But since the believer is also a man, a constant tension remains.<sup>2</sup>

It is because of this "constant tension" in the life of man as both justified and sinner that his whole life must be one of repentance, in Luther's thought. The tension itself, when experienced, is the beginning of grace. As such, it must be experienced daily, and daily renewal must result. Accordingly, this life of repentance

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<sup>1</sup>Seeberg, op. cit., p. 264.

<sup>2</sup>Kantonen, op. cit., p. 53.



is to take the place of the discipline once exacted through the Sacrament of Penance. The centrality of these concepts in Luther's theology is verified by the first two of the ninety-five theses he posted which ignited the Reformation in 1517:

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ when he said "Repent" willed that the whole life of believers should be of repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood as referring to Sacramental Penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, which is performed in the ministration of priests.<sup>1</sup>

No, this repentance is to spring from man's own assurance of being justified by faith through God's grace, which comes as a gift, and it is to take place within the framework of man's own personal relationship to God alone.

But, it must be asked, when Paul describes the Gospel as "the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" (Romans 1:16), is he not thereby making faith itself into a work, or, at least, a condition required for salvation? Many biblical scholars have understood Paul in this manner:

"Faith is the indispensable and only condition for salvation" (Althaus). "Faith is declared to be the only and unfailing effective condition for the attainment of salvation" (Julicher). "Faith is the condition on the part of man without which the Gospel cannot have power for him" (B. Weiss). "Nothing but faith is demanded in order that man may experience the righteousness of God" (von Hoffman).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>2</sup>Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 68.

Yet such a legalistic and works-oriented understanding of faith is not at all what was meant by Paul. He had no thought of apportioning to God and man respective contributions to salvation. As Anders Nygren comments on Paul's concept of faith:

For him faith is not a subjective quality which must be present in man if the Gospel is to be able to show its power. It is truer to say that one's faith is evidence that the Gospel has exercised its power over him. It is not man's faith that gives the Gospel its power; quite the contrary, it is the power of the Gospel that makes it possible for one to believe.<sup>1</sup>

It is for this reason that Luther used the phrase "sola fide," or "by faith alone." It was his intention thereby to specifically avoid every legalistic or works-righteous connotation. Also, it was this concept which cut at the heart of the Roman Sacrament of Penance. For such faith is more than mere assensus, or intellectual affirmation of a truth; there must also be fiducia, or the heart's trust in the grace of God in Christ.

Luther's position concerning the doctrine of Justification by Faith has herewith been treated at some length, as it is deemed basic for all subsequent Protestant dogma. The other Reformers, although differing with Luther on other matters, were in substantial agreement with him here. As Bainton points out, Ulrich Zwingli followed Luther's position and "preached justification by faith and denied

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

the possibility of good works."<sup>1</sup> John Calvin also stressed justification, but in a different order from Luther.

Both Calvin and Luther had an overwhelming sense of the majesty of God, but whereas for Luther this served to point up the miracle of forgiveness, for Calvin it gave rather the assurance of the impregnability of God's purpose. Consequently, the Institutes treat first of the sovereignty of God ahead of the section on Justification by faith.<sup>2</sup>

This emphasis upon God's sovereignty has carried over into later Confessional documents of Calvin's followers, for, as Karl Barth confirms, "The Reformed creed lays emphasis not so much upon the idea that man is justified by faith and not by works as upon the prior consideration that it is God and not man who accomplishes the justification."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, for the purposes of this study as concerns the Protestant understanding of Justification by Faith, it is significant to note that the leading theologians cited, Luther and Calvin, are pioneers of the position described by Bonthius as being essentially "Rejectionist." By this he refers to the conviction of both Luther and Calvin that man is unable to find fulfillment in himself. Consequently the self is "rejected" (from the Latin rejicio, meaning to cast behind or throw back) in the interest of doing the

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<sup>1</sup>Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1952), p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), p. 251.

divine will in every area of life. Some contemporary spokesmen for this position are Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Reinhold Niebuhr. As concerns the rejectionist understanding of Justification by Faith, Bonthius declares:

According to this doctrine, man must finally despair of his efforts to find security in temporal things, such as wealth or power, or in interpersonal relationships, such as romance. He must discover that he is a helpless but responsible victim of his own egocentricity. "This is harder than all penances, prayers, and good works of the pious heathen," declares Brunner. "For there is nothing in all the world so humiliating as no longer to trust in one's self."

This conviction of one's vain self-love contains within itself the possibility of a re-orientation of life about the only true center and end: namely, God. As Niebuhr puts the case for serving God only: "Human personality is so constructed that it must be possessed if it is to escape the prison of self-possession. The infinite regression of its self-transcendence represents possibilities of freedom which are never actualized in self-possession; for self-possession means self-centredness. The self must be possessed from beyond itself."<sup>1</sup>

It is this "rejectionist" position that is accepted by this writer as providing the most meaningful framework for understanding the doctrine of forgiveness in this study.

#### The Cure of Souls: "Seelsorge"

The significance of confession in theology arises out of the preceding understanding of the doctrine of sin, along with its subsequent understanding of the doctrine of forgiveness. These two doctrines, in turn, provide the

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<sup>1</sup>Bonthius, op. cit., p. 12.

foundation for the clearest expression of theological confession, per se, which takes place within the framework of the Cure of Souls, or the German "Seelsorge." As Seward Hiltner rightly points out, much of Seelsorge is devoted to "discipline," with the result that he is hesitant to identify exactly Seelsorge with Pastoral Theology (according to his definition), as such.<sup>1</sup> But there is certainly much connection between the two. Regardless, the concept of Seelsorge definitely implies that man's relationship with God and his relationship with fellow men are inseparable, emerging from the Great Commandment of Jesus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

As has been previously shown, Jesus had a great concern for the cure of each individual soul with whom he came in contact.<sup>2</sup> This emphasis has been an uneven characteristic of the history of Seelsorge.<sup>3</sup> At least one of

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<sup>1</sup>Seward Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 43. Hiltner herein defines Pastoral Theology as "that branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations" (p. 20).

<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 23f.

<sup>3</sup>For detailed and systematic histories of pastoral care see the cited works of McNeill, op. cit., and Kemp, op. cit.

the early Church Fathers, John Chrysostom (d. 407) was particularly concerned not to lose sight of the individual personality, and so deplored of wooden regulations to cover all violations of church discipline. He claimed, "It is not right to take an absolute standard and fit the penalty to the exact measure of the offense," and, even more sensitively, "No one can, by compulsion, cure an unwilling man."<sup>1</sup> Yet the growth and spread of the Christian Church resulted in a practical necessity for uniform procedures. This need was largely met with the advent of the aforementioned Penitential books.<sup>2</sup> They were written by British (Welsh) and Irish monks, and their English and Continental imitators, from the sixth to sixteenth centuries. They contained detailed instructions for use in the cure of souls from sin, with specific penances cited to cover all manner of misdeeds. In this connection it is interesting to note that in some places it was permissible to make confession to laymen rather than priests, and in Ireland even women occasionally acted as confessors! But at least one Penitential book "explicitly excludes women from prescribing penance, since this is a function of priests alone."<sup>3</sup>

While many of the Penitentials are cold and

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Albert L. Meiburg, "The Heritage of the Pastoral Counselor," in An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling, ed. Wayne E. Oates (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 79f.    <sup>3</sup>McNeill, op. cit., p. 118.

indifferent to individual human situations, others are warmly personal. One of the latter provides some delicate insights of the dynamics experienced as the confessor is given suggestions for an interview with his confessant:

He is to be tenderly led step by step. The priest "shall softly and gently question him first on the faith," questions of the Trinity and the Resurrection follow. The next question is from the Lord's Prayer, and is an element often stressed: "Wilt thou forgive those who have sinned against thee?" Is the penitent incestuous, or insubordinante: if so, he may still obtain forgiveness. Then the priest is affectionately to exhort him, beginning: "Brother, do not blush to confess thy sins, for I also am a sinner, and perchance I have done worse deeds than thou hast." If he is still bashfully silent, the priest suggests that his memory needs prompting and proceeds to question him in detail, warning him against concealment. Thus a cautious, gradual and sympathetic approach having been made, the confessant is confronted with the task of revealing his sins to the priest one by one. A minute interrogation follows. But in chapter VII, after a brief exhortation on the curing of the several Deadly Sins by their contrary virtues, the penitent prostrates himself on the ground with tears, confessing himself guilty of all the sins "either in thought or speech or deed or love or lust." The priest also prostrates himself, uttering psalms and prayers.<sup>1</sup>

These ceremonies were well designed to make of the confession an experience of profound importance for the penitent, as the whole interview was concerned with his particular case. Again, great empathy was stressed, as the priest becomes very involved in the procedure, even to the point of suggesting that he may, himself, have committed worse sins than the confessant! Considerable coercion and probing is evident, although both parties end the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

confessional experience in humble prostration.

But as the Christian Church grew with the passage of centuries these early methods in the cure of souls became more formalized. Penance became a recognized sacrament necessary for salvation, as confirmed by the Catholic Counter-Reformation in its Council of Trent Decrees of 1552. The confessional became central in Roman pastoral care. This situation has changed little up to the present date. "Modern Roman Catholicism, having reaffirmed in the Council of Trent with great exactness the essential medieval practices of confession, penance, and indulgences, has maintained the activity of the confessional."<sup>1</sup>

In seeking to discover exactly what takes place within the Roman Catholic confessional booth, it is soon apparent that there has been much confusion historically. As Lea chronicles early practices:

As enforced confession was gradually reduced to a system, the priest was accordingly instructed to interrogate the sinner seriatim on each of the precepts of the Decalogue, the seven deadly sins, the abuses of the five senses and the thoughts and lusts of the heart. No loophole was to be left through which the penitent could escape the searching inquisition. Minute and suggestive lists were drawn up, hideous catechisms of sins, and though occasional caution was uttered, recommending reticence, especially as to lapses of the flesh, virginal purity and innocence could be no safeguard against foul and indecent questions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John T. McNeill, "An Historical Survey of Religious Healing," in The Church and Mental Health, ed. Paul B. Maves (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Lea, op. cit., p. 370.



But this type of third-degree interrogation was only the beginning. As confessional procedures developed under scholastic theologians they grew much more elaborate. All sins were to be examined in the most precise particulars, and in order for the confessor to perform his function properly he was required to pursue his inquiries into every detail.

All possible lapses from rectitude in every sphere of human activity were investigated and estimated and catalogued and defined with a minuteness that had never before been attempted by the moralists, and huge books were compiled to afford the priest the necessary aid in pushing his inquiries. The Ten Commandments, the seven deadly sins, the five senses, the twelve articles of faith, the seven sacraments, the seven works of temporal mercy and the seven spiritual, were ransacked to find objects of inquiry, and then all classes and callings of men were successively reviewed and lists of questions were drawn up fitted for their several temptations and habitual transgressions.<sup>1</sup>

After making such a cataloging one Catholic authority came up with seven hundred possible areas of inquiry to be pursued by the confessor! Another listed at least forty-five different classes of penitents with specific regulations for the interrogation of each! The burden of responsibility for uncovering the facts was assumed by the confessor-priests, as the confessants were assumed to conceal their sins as much as they could. And other problems arose, too: what about the individual with many mortal sins who spreads out their total impact, and subsequent satisfaction, by

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

confessing them in part to each of several different priests? Is such permissible, or is such an action an additional mortal sin in itself? What about the man who seeks to retain his confessor's good will, and so confesses to him only venial sins while taking his mortal sins to another confessor? How is "gregarious confession" (i.e., when a multitude of penitents confess together) to be treated? What about repeated confessions? Written confessions? Fees for confession? Confession of handicapped persons (e.g., deaf and dumb)? Lea advises:

For five hundred years and more these questions have been agitated without the possibility of reaching absolute conclusions, and, indeed, a large portion of them depend upon shades of feeling so elusive and indefinable that certainty is unattainable. All that the theologians can do is to comfort themselves with the maximum In dubio standum est pro valore actus--in doubt, the validity of the act is to be assumed--but whether God is bound by this principle it might be hardy to affirm.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 361f. In dealing with problems of Moral Theology there arose the science of "Casuistry," which Hiltner defines, in Protestant criticism of Catholic usage, as "retaining fixed and legalistic general principles, but manipulating within them for the arbitrary advantage of some individuals," but also stating, "Rightly understood, casuistry is the criticism of all general principles in the light of the person," Hiltner, op. cit., p. 150. As McNeill points out, the history of casuistry is lengthy and has not been confined to Catholic use alone (History; see index). Nevertheless, it was employed with particular effectiveness by the Roman Jesuits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially the method of "probabilism," or "the determination of freedom from obligation of conscience on the basis of a 'probable' opinion--one which has support from some authority, even where a contrary opinion is 'more probable,' i.e., has fuller support from authorities" (ibid., p. 291.) In attack upon Roman casuistry there was printed (1656-57) one of the great

Yet even more thorny than these theoretical matters was the practical problem of the relationship between the confessor-priest and the women who came to him in the confessional booth. There were many charges that the depth inquisition of carnal sins had led women into actions of which they had previously known nothing. Many confessors were known to delight in questioning women indecently, and so to stimulate them to temptation. Of course, there was also the risk of the confessor himself becoming corrupted, as the priest, with all the passions of a man, has whispered in his ear from female lips the acknowledgment of lustful longings or of temptation unresisted. Accordingly, "in view of these admitted dangers, it cannot be a matter of surprise that the seduction of women in the confessional has always been a source of anxiety to the Church."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the history of the confessional contains abundant material of such scandal, and "sensational exposes" have luridly proclaimed the colorful details.<sup>2</sup> Such immoral priests were known as "solicitors of evil," and, while it was not easy to define what constituted solicitation in

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literary works of the seventeenth century, Blaise Pascal's Pensees and the Provincial Letters (New York: The Modern Library, 1941), which made a marked impact.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> Such an expose is Thomas Edward Leyden, The Roman Catholic Practice of Auricular or Secret Confession to a Priest (Somerville, Mass.: 41 Brastow Avenue, 1893), which bears the subtitle, "Published by a Converted Roman Catholic."

confession, the advantage was taken of construing it in the strictest and most limited manner.

Accordingly, it appears that the whole matter of the cure of souls in the Confessional was getting out of hand, as indeed it was. But gradually a reaction set in, and the overwhelming inquisitions and immoralities began to decline. Later Roman authorities began to sanction more realistic procedures.

Father Gabat reiterates the old prescriptions as to carrying the penitent through the Decalogue and the seven mortal sins and the precepts of the Church, but he cautions the priest not to render the confession too onerous and unpleasant to the penitent and he virtually admits the superfluity of it all.<sup>1</sup>

As Roman Confessional practices have developed in more recent times, there has been a definite relaxation of the process of interrogation, "perhaps partly because of the increase in modern refinement and delicacy and partly in view of the steadily diminishing importance of penance."<sup>2</sup> In illustration, it is instructive to have at least one author's account of specifically what happens in the Roman Confessional Box:

When you have said the "Act of Contrition," go to the confessional box, kneel down, and when you see the priest ready to hear you, begin your confession by making the sign of the cross: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Then say: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned." Repeat the Confetior, as follows: "I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy

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<sup>1</sup>Lea, op. cit., p. 374.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 376.

Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints, and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault (here strike your breast three times): therefore I beseech the blessed Mary ever Virgin, the blessed Michael the Archangel, and blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the Saints, and you Father, to pray to the Lord our God for me." Then, first of all, tell your confessor how long it is since you made your last confession--whether that confession was a good one--whether you received the absolution of your sins from the priest--and if you have performed the penance imposed upon you.

Then proceed with the confession of your sins. When the priest questions you, be careful that your answers be brief and to the point, without covering up your sins, and without false excuses.

After you have confessed your sins, conclude your confession in the following words: "For these and all my other sins which I may have forgotten, I am heartily sorry, and I humbly ask of you, Reverend Father, penance, and absolution, if you think me worthy." Listen, humbly, to whatever your confessor may have to say; pay attention to the penance which he imposes upon you for your sins; and when you perceive that he is about to give you his absolution, say the Act of Contrition.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, it is significant to note that the procedures to be followed generally rest entirely with the individual confessor. He is given the widest latitude to follow his own habits, discretion, and conscience. He is responsible only to God: there is no appeal from him and no one to call him to account. As for the penitent, he is "bound to silence by the 'natural seal' as is the confessor by the 'sacramental seal,' and, save in cases of direct solicitation to evil, the secrets of the confession-al must be revealed by neither."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Leyden, op. cit., pp. 24f.

<sup>2</sup>Lea, op. cit., p. 378.

In seeking to ascertain the value of the Roman Confessional for the cure of souls, it is concluded that the overall effect is definitely mixed. Van Nostrand's investigation led him to state that the Confessional is of value in (1) the unburdening experience of confession itself; (2) as preventive psychic medicine, in curbing harmful repression; (3) as a Sacramental act assuring divine forgiveness; at the same time its disadvantages include the compulsory character, impersonalism, legalism and authoritarianism involved in the confessor being man's judge.<sup>1</sup> In spite of continuous misuse and abuse of the Confessional booth throughout its history, there is no doubt that good has often resulted. As a Roman layman describes the contemporary scene:

Stand outside a Catholic Church anywhere on Saturday afternoon or evening and you'll see a steady stream of people going in and coming out. Most of them, you may be sure, are going to Confession. They may look thoughtful, even worried, as they enter, but observe them closely as they emerge. You'll see, almost certainly, a new look of contentment on their faces, and the light of God's peace in their eyes.<sup>2</sup>

Such an impression as the above may be described as the "popular" opinion held by many practicing Catholics who have been thoroughly indoctrinated in the Roman Sacramental system. That is, their prior assumption, or expectation,

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<sup>1</sup>Van Nostrand, op. cit., Abstract, pp. 2f.

<sup>2</sup>Virgil A. Kelly, The Truth About Catholics (New York: The Dial Press, 1954), p. 96.

before going to Confession was that they would thereby gain grace and/or find relief. Consequently, in the knowledge that they have utilized the means offered by their church for the remission of sins, they will obtain a feeling of comfort or well-being, albeit only in a legalistic sense.

On the other hand, and on a much deeper level than mere superficial peace of mind, it must honestly be questioned whether the Roman Confessional results in any genuine cure of souls. An active Catholic, E. Boyd Barrett, who has no theological ax to grind, but who speaks as an "insider," having once been a priest but later a practicing psychiatrist, makes some insightful contributions in an article entitled "The Drama of Catholic Confession":

The writer of this paper has had a considerable personal experience of Catholic confession. A thousand times or more he has confessed his own sins. He has heard, as a priest, the confessions of thousands of Catholics. Furthermore, he has been consulted, outside confession, by many Catholics whose analyses disclosed the fact that their mental health had suffered as a consequence of confession. He has had, therefore, the unique opportunity of studying confession from three angles: that of the penitent, that of the confessor, and that of the analyst. Relying on his experience the writer is inclined to dissent from the view that confession, as a general rule, affords a healthy mode of self-revelation such as psychologists desiderate. It is too fragmentary, too artificial, and too coercive in character to be a health-giving mode of release. Legislation has dehumanized confession, and made it, for perhaps the majority of Catholics, a burden rather than a source of comfort. And the proof that it does not protect Catholics from nervous trouble lies in the undeniable fact that Catholics to the same extent as others suffer from neuroses. And among nervous

Catholics both priests and nuns are to be found in due proportion.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, it must be recognized that the Catholic Sacrament of Penance, focused upon the Confessional, is not by any means the only form of Roman pastoral care. Indeed, modern Catholicism has made significant progress in Pastoral Counseling, which, as a Jesuit psychologist points out, "is to be distinguished from guidance on the one hand and from psychotherapy on the other."<sup>2</sup> Yet all such shepherding activity comes within the overarching authority of the Roman Church herself. And, as Jaroslav Pelikan explains, "Roman Catholic religious life is centered in the seven sacraments of the church. By these sacraments the faithful live and die."<sup>3</sup> As Penance is the Sacrament of confession and reconciliation, it holds a tremendous role in the cure of souls. However, as has been pointed out, it can easily be misused. "At its best, it is the voice of the church announcing the gospel of God's free grace and forgiveness to its members. At its worst, it is the

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Charles T. Holman, The Cure of Souls (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>William C. Bier, S. J., "Goals in Pastoral Counseling," Pastoral Psychology, X, No. 91 (February, 1959), 21. It is significant to note that this issue of Pastoral Psychology magazine, which is essentially a Protestant publication, is devoted entirely to "Catholic Viewpoints in Pastoral Psychology."

<sup>3</sup>Jaroslav Pelikan, The Riddle of Roman Catholicism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 110.



crucifixion of consciences."<sup>1</sup> Such a "crucifixion" can take place when coercive and probing methods are employed in the hands of an insensitive and domineering priest. Using the great authority of the Confessional, the Confessor can arouse compunctions and scruples over petty offenses, which cause great guilt feelings and impose intolerable burdens upon the sincere and obedient penitent.

On an even deeper level, however, it is the opinion of this writer that the Roman Sacrament of Penance is actually an infringement upon God's grace. The Catholic Church regulates Confession in such a legalistic manner that it takes the judgment of Christ into its own hands and thereby controls grace. There is no way to forgiveness except as the Church teaches, or, rather, dictates. The Roman Church does not merely offer confession: it compels confession. Accordingly, the Catholic dogma is at violence with the gospel itself! As Eduard Thurneysen, a European Reformed theologian, laments:

When confessing becomes a law, the freedom of grace is encroached upon. When the priest and he alone can remit sins, the evangel is pushed aside. For according to the Gospel it is Christ and Christ alone who forgives sins. He is the true "priest" to whom we may bring our sins, because He alone can remove them from us.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Luthi and Eduard Thurneysen, Preaching, Confession, The Lord's Supper, trans. Francis J. Brooke III (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1957), p. 43.

Yet at the same time perhaps Jaroslav Pelikan offers a more reasoned characterization of Roman doctrine when he comments:

In the hands of a conscientious pastor, the sacrament of penance makes divine grace meaningful without minimizing the individual's responsibility for his sin. It is, at its best, a truly evangelical means for "the cure of souls," one whose benefits Protestantism has discarded too easily, and one for which a friendly chat with the minister is not a satisfactory substitute.

. . . Like the other sacraments, penance accentuates the riddle of Roman Catholicism by bringing out the best and the worst in the church: the best, which is its concern for imparting the grace of God and its understanding of human frailty; and the worst, which is its tendency to "play God" and to tyrannize its members with the law.<sup>1</sup>

In partial reply to Pelikan's statement above it must be remembered that Protestantism did not discard confession "too easily." In fact, the sixteenth-century reformers were largely in favor of it--although they had trouble in considering Penance a sacrament. In one of his major writings of the year 1520 Luther originally did accept Penance as one of three recognized sacraments, along with Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>2</sup> Yet later in this same treatise (which is quite lengthy and was written over a period of time) he retracts his earlier statement in holding that "strictly speaking" there are only the latter two sacraments, as they alone bear the divinely instituted

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<sup>1</sup>Pelikan, op. cit., pp. 120f. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in Three Treatises (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1943), p. 126.

visible signs and promise of forgiveness of sins which are required of Means of Grace.<sup>1</sup>

Luther attacks the Roman presumption that the Catholic Church alone has the authority to forgive sins through the "power of the keys," claiming "Christ has given to every one of His believers the power to absolve even open sins."<sup>2</sup> He also attacks the concepts of Contrition and Attrition, indulgences, satisfactions, asserting that there is no biblical justification for them. He opposes detailed recitals of sins as works-righteousness, holding, "We owe whatever of good there may be in our penance, not to our scrupulous enumeration of sins, but to the truth of God and our faith."<sup>3</sup> Luther sees great value in the pronouncement of Absolution within the act of Penance, yet charges that it "ought rather to follow on the completion of satisfaction, as it did in the ancient church, with the result that, after completing the work, penitents gave themselves with greater diligence to faith and the living of a new life."<sup>4</sup>

Of private confession, which is now observed, I am heartily in favor, even though it cannot be proved from the Scriptures; it is useful and necessary, nor would I have it abolished--nay, I rejoice that it exists in the Church of Christ, for it is a cure without equal for distressed consciences. For when we have laid bare our conscience to our brother and privately made known to him the evil that lurked within, we receive from our

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 243f.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 200.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

brother's lips the word of comfort spoken by God himself; and, if we accept it in faith, we find peace in the mercy of God speaking to us through our brother.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that Luther is herein making another charge against the Roman practice of having priests alone empowered to act as confessors. He interprets Matthew 18:15-20 as a unitary injunction to each and every Christian. "The binding and loosing passage of verse 18 had regularly been associated with the Apostles, but Luther would regard it as an authorization to all Christians to hear confessions and absolve."<sup>2</sup> This idea was to find fuller expression in Luther's reformation doctrine of the "Priesthood of all believers," in which all Christians pray for each other and share their spiritual gifts. Luther, then, recognizes three sorts of confession: to God alone, to a brother-confessor who pronounces God's absolution, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 201. (Italics mine.) In connection with Luther's phrase, "distressed consciences," in this passage, it is significant to note that in Erik Erikson's work on Luther he defines "conscience" as "that inner ground where we and God have to learn to live with each other as man and wife. Psychologically speaking, it is where the ego meets the superego; that is, where our self can either live in wedded harmony with a positive conscience or is estranged from a negative one" (op. cit., p. 195). This appears to be Luther's concept, too, as his experiences of a negative conscience largely sprung from feeling estranged from God.

<sup>2</sup>McNeill, History, p. 167. For a specifically enumerated listing of Luther's ideas concerning what he preferred both to retain and abolish from the Roman Sacrament of Penance, see Granger Westberg, "Private Confession in the Lutheran Church," The Augustana Quarterly, XXIV, No. 2 (April, 1945), 143-145.

to a brother against whom one has offended, asking his forgiveness.

In 1520 Luther published a work specifically dealing with confession, his Confitendi Ratio (Method of Confessing), which is a Latin version of a German tract written in 1519. McNeill describes its contents in that

the remission of sins is here made to rest not on formal confession but on the goodness of God. Confession should be made first to God, on whose love and promises the soul must rely. . . . Not all secret sins of the heart need be confessed to a priest, but only those clearly purposed against God's commandments. . . . An exhaustive confession is, in fact, a sheer impossibility. . . . Luther would sweep away all hateful and wearisome catalogues of distinctions "of sins against the virtues, sins of the five senses, sins against the Beatitudes," etc.<sup>1</sup>

In writing against exhaustive confessions and catalogues of sins, Luther is speaking out of his own background of painful soul searching, as indicated previously.<sup>2</sup> Hence, here he was the Reformer with a real concern for the cure of souls. He was much opposed to legalistic manipulations which were purely external and artificial, and, instead, sought a true transformation of man's inner nature--his very heart. Such a transformation was to be evident not only in man's relationship with God, but also in the Christian's relationship with other men, as attested by the numerous letters of spiritual counsel which Luther wrote to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 90.

people in distress.<sup>1</sup>

While Luther favors private confession, he sees no scriptural obligation for it, and so stresses that it must be voluntary, in contrast to the Roman Church. Yet he seems to feel that this very voluntary nature may cause people to take it lightly, so in his Small Catechism he specifically includes one whole section in a detailed description of "How the Unlearned Should Be Taught to Confess."<sup>2</sup> Herein Luther describes confession as embracing only two parts (in contrast with the three-part Roman division): (1) confession of sin, and (2) absolution, or forgiveness. He always stressed "the 'comfort of absolution,' which is the main thing in confession."<sup>3</sup> Yet, being true to his doctrine of grace, he understood absolution as "only a declaration by man of what God has decreed in heaven, and

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<sup>1</sup>Examples of such correspondence are evident in Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955). Although very scriptural, these letters are generally highly authoritative and directive in nature. Luther often simply told his correspondents what to do without guiding them into personal problem solving. In discussing Luther's one-way "Seelsorge," a contemporary Swedish churchman states: "Here is a point where modern client-centered methods have a real contribution to make to Lutheran pastoral care. . . . Pastoral care ought to be more client-centered than was Luther's pastoral care." (Henrik Ivarsson, "The Principles of Pastoral Care According to Martin Luther," Pastoral Psychology, XIII, No. 121 (February, 1962), 21.)

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism," in Book of Concord, pp. 162f.

<sup>3</sup>McNeill, History, p. 170.

not a ratification by God of what man has ruled on earth."<sup>1</sup>  
In the matter of absolution, as often elsewhere, too, Luther was following the thought of William of Occam (d. ca. 1349). Occam had held that in the Roman Sacrament of Penance, absolution alone is essential--yet absolution itself does not loose, but merely demonstrates that the sinner is forgiven. Accordingly, it presupposes the remission of sins to be already accomplished.

In his Small Catechism Luther proposes a general form which might be followed in the activity of confession. In answer to the catechetical question, "What sins should we confess?," he writes: "Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even of those which we do not know, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the confessor we should confess those sins alone which we know and feel in our hearts."<sup>2</sup> Here Luther is saying that it accomplishes nothing to recite lists of sins to God, as he initially knows us better than we know ourselves, so from the outset we should confess our overall guilt. Then, to the confessor, we should admit the specific sins which we "feel in our hearts." The writer interprets this last injunction to mean that the penitent should confess not only the sins recognized to be in violation of God's law, but anything which is causing distress and pain of conscience.

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<sup>1</sup>Bainton, Here I Stand, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>Luther, Small Catechism, p. 163.

Luther continually stressed that no works of merit resulted from confession, yet at the same time he zealously urges that private confession--"our dear confession"--be practiced. He exhorts:

If a poor miserable beggar heard that in a certain place were being distributed rich alms of money and clothing, would he need to be taken there by a policeman? . . . If you are poor and in misery, go and confess, and use this means to health. . . . If, however, you despise this treasure, and if you are too proud to confess your sins, we conclude that you are no Christian, and neither ought you to share in the Sacrament (of the Lord's Supper). . . . So when I urge the practice of confession, I am but urging every man to be a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

It is significant to note here that Luther identifies personal pride as a hindrance to confession, just as he earlier associated pride with sin itself.<sup>2</sup> Also, as concerns the "cure of souls" he describes confession as "this means to health." There is no law or obligation to confess, but only the analogy of a great gift which is available to all in their poor and miserable condition.

As relates to the doctrine of forgiveness, Luther held that while grace is free and sure, this very liberty might become license in the absence of constraining law. Consequently, the Christian needs the discipline which keeps the liberty real and prevents its corruption. Confession provides just such a discipline. The confessor

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Max Thurian, Confession (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1958), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 69.



becomes somewhat of a "jailer," to insure its enforcement, or even a devil's advocate!

For those among the people who will not obey the Gospel, it is necessary that there be a gaoler, to be for them the devil and executioner of God. . . . It is better to be "compelled" to practice confession, to fast, etc. . . . than to despise the voluntary and joyous discipline of confession, fasting, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Philip Melanchthon, Luther's Reformation cohort, held that Penance was a Sacrament, in contrast to Luther's later position.<sup>2</sup> Writing in his Apology of the Augsburg Confession Melanchthon states, "We also retain confession, especially on account of the absolution, as being the word of God. . . . Therefore it would be wicked to remove private absolution from the Church."<sup>3</sup> He here reflects Luther's conviction that confession and absolution both be viewed from within the framework of the Christian Church itself--that is, they are not isolated activities but always take place within the sphere of relationships, both with God and fellow man. This is what makes absolution such a word of comfort, as by it the penitent knows that he has been reconciled, accepted, and restored into relationship. As Thurneysen contends:

The Church of Jesus must be present as the place where we receive the word of forgiveness. In, with, and

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<sup>1</sup>Thurian, op. cit., p. 29. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Philip Melanchthon, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," in Book of Concord, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

through the issuance of this word comes the miracle of the uncovering and taking away of our sin: our guilt is extirpated, we are freed from the domination of sin, and a new life is awakened.<sup>1</sup>

This high churchly position is essentially the same one taken by John Calvin as well. For him, like Luther, penance is not a sacrament, as his Institutes of the Christian Religion reads:

For "it is not an external ceremony instituted by the Lord for the confirmation of our faith," and again because "there is no promise of God, which is the only foundation of a Sacrament"; in fact, "the promise of the keys does not pertain to the making of some particular state of absolution, but only to the preaching of the Gospel."<sup>2</sup>

Yet Calvin also sees great worth in non-obligatory private confession. Again, like Luther, he recognizes three sorts of confession, yet with a significant qualification.

Whereas Luther was inclined to permit any Christian brother to act as his confessor in pronouncing God's word of forgiveness, Calvin, characteristically, has a more presbyterian attitude:

Though the Scripture, by not expressly appointing anyone to whom we should disburden ourselves, leaves us at liberty to confess to any member of the Church who shall appear most suitable; yet, since the Pastors must be considered more proper for this than others, we ought chiefly to make choice of them. I say that they are more suitable than others, since in their very vocation to the ministry, they are designated by God, to instruct us to subdue our sins, and to certify us of God's goodness, for our consolation. Therefore, let

<sup>1</sup>Thurneysen, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>As quoted by Thurian, op. cit., p. 25. (Italics mine.)

every believer, if he feels such perplexity of conscience that he cannot do without the help of another person, consider, that he ought not to neglect the remedy offered him by God: which is, that in order to alleviate his distress and deliver himself from scruple, he should confess privately to his pastor, and receive consolation from him, whose office it is, both privately and publicly, to comfort the people of God with the doctrine of the Gospel. Nevertheless we must always so act that men's consciences be not bound and subjected to any yoke, where God has left us free to choose.<sup>1</sup>

Here Calvin's hierarchical convictions are evident. He holds that pastors are plainly the "more proper" authorities to hear confessions, and "more suitable than others" since they are "designated by God." In a later edition of his Institutes Calvin deepens this thought, affirming:

While we all ought mutually to console each other, yet we see that ministers are constituted by God witnesses and as it were sureties, to certify our consciences of the remission of sins; insomuch that they themselves are said to remit sins and loose souls (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23). When we find this attributed to them, let us consider that it is for our benefit.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin's authoritarian inclinations are now clear. Pastors are not only to preach the Gospel but are also in themselves "sureties" for the remission of sins. Concerning Calvin's usage of the word "surety," Protestant monk Max Thurian writes:

Echoing the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews (7:22), he speaks of Jesus Christ as "surety (pleige) and Mediator of a better covenant." He uses the French word pleige to translate the Latin word sponsor, which means surety, bailman, guarantor (of someone's promises). It is interesting to note that Calvin uses the word in connection with the Epistle to the Hebrews to signify the ministry of Christ, and in the context with which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 30f.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

we are dealing to designate the role of the pastor in the exercise of his ministry as a confessor. The pastor is joined to Christ the High Priest in the exercise of this solemn office. His ministry is the present manifestation of the eternal mediation of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Such concepts of Calvin lean very much toward the Roman position concerning the authority of the priesthood and the power of the keys. However, Thurian claims that Calvin is merely returning to the "authentic tradition of the Early Fathers," and warns: "The whole context of his thoughts on penitence and the power of the keys shows that he attributes this power of absolution not to the church or the minister in themselves, but insofar as they preach the Gospel."<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt, however, that Calvin makes much of the pastor's word of absolution. While Luther viewed absolution as a wonderfully comforting pronouncement of forgiveness already accomplished in Christ, Calvin sees it as a very present confirmation and seal of the grace of the Gospel. This contrast is not so much a matter of distinct difference as it is one of emphasis. For Luther the truly significant point was that forgiveness had already been completed, while Calvin felt that "absolution must be followed by spiritual direction, by counsel founded on the Word of God, if not immediately, at least in connection with the confession."<sup>3</sup> Hence, for Calvin, absolution is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 33f.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 35f.

conditional: faith is necessary for it to be received effectively.

It is the feeling of this writer that Calvin had nowhere near the warmth and sensitivity of Luther in his Seelsorge. Statements of Calvin intended to guide the anguished soul to confession, such as, "if he feels such perplexity of conscience that he cannot do without the help of another person, etc.," seem to indicate a disdain for the weaknesses of others. Often his spiritual direction would consist of frankly suppressive admonitions handed down from his superior position. Calvin's letters of spiritual counsel reveal this attitude. Like Luther, he wrote many such letters, and "the element of personal guidance, or 'direction' abounds in Calvin's correspondence, as doubtless every reader of it has observed."<sup>1</sup> Luther was also very forceful in his letters, but this writer has the feeling that perhaps because of Luther's own personal sufferings of mind and spirit he was more effective than Calvin in dealing with such situations. At any rate, both Calvin and Luther had great respect for the experience of confession in the cure of souls.

The last of the great pioneer Protestant leaders to be treated in this section is John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church. Wesley also was much opposed to the

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<sup>1</sup>McNeill, History, p. 201.

mandatory character of Roman penance, although he highly regarded confession itself. He writes:

We grant confession to men to be in many cases of use: public, in case of public scandal, private to a spiritual guide for disburdening of the conscience, and as an help to repentance. But to make auricular confession, or particular confession to a Priest, necessary to forgiveness and salvation when God has not so made it, is apparently to teach for doctrine the commandment of men; and to make it necessary in all cases, is to make, of what may be a useful means a dangerous snare, both to the confessor and those that confess.<sup>1</sup>

As concerns absolution, Wesley felt that the power to "'pardon sin, and absolve the sinner judicially' is 'reserved by God to himself,'" in contrast with the Roman view of the priest's authority.<sup>2</sup> He had rather a low church view, compared to Calvin, and held that "'the authority of the priest is only ministerial, declarative and conditional.'"<sup>3</sup>

Pertaining to confession, in Wesley's Methodist Church the earliest units of organization were the "bands," or groups organized for the purpose of mutual confession and discipline. These "bands" were subdivided into "classes" of about twelve members each, under a class leader.

They were people who especially "needed to pour out their hearts" to one another. . . . Each member, beginning with the leader, was to confess his faults and temptations and the state of his soul, and to accept

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Frederick Greeves in "Foreword" to Thurian, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

criticism. In order to be admitted to the group each had to declare his desire to be told all his faults, even if this should "cut to the quick." . . . The members were to "help each other to work out their salvation."<sup>1</sup>

Such "classes" seem to be one of the forerunners of present day group therapy. Further, the Methodist heritage of such confessional groups accounts in no small measure for the traditional Methodist concern for the cure of souls. In fact, one contemporary Methodist authority, Carroll A. Wise, plainly states that his book on Pastoral Counseling "might be titled, 'The Christian Practice of Confession.'"<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, it must be declared that confession is not a commonly practiced element of contemporary Protestantism, apart from general liturgical confession and absolution within the mass framework of the regular worship service. Although Luther, Calvin, and Wesley all approved of private confession as of great value in the cure of souls, the very non-obligatory and free character which they stressed has resulted in its withering away. Some form of auricular (i.e., secret, private) confession has been retained in several of the more liturgical Protestant branches, notably the Episcopalian and Lutheran denominations, although, as Granger Westberg has shown in connection with the latter, its practice has been very uneven and

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<sup>1</sup>McNeill, History, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll A. Wise, Pastoral Counseling: Its Theory and Practice (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 156.

is often confined to a conversation with the pastor prior to receiving the Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup>

However, there has been a definite revival of interest in confession among Protestants in recent years. This has largely come about as the result of the tremendous advances made in Seelsorge within the framework of Pastoral Counseling.<sup>2</sup> One outstanding Protestant clergyman, in telling of his early beginnings in Pastoral Counseling, declares, "I wanted a Protestant version of the Catholic confessional."<sup>3</sup> Such testimony is typical of the spirit of many contemporary pastoral counselors. In such cases confession is certainly not formal, or even specifically labelled as "confession," per se. Rather, it is in line with the observation of Daniel Day Williams:

There is the need for confession. . . . Protestant churches are rethinking the theology and practice of confession in the light of the pastoral counselor. Whether or not we accept the institution of confession as a sacramental and liturgical form, we know the

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<sup>1</sup>Westberg, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Seward Hiltner offers a fine history of this progress, particularly for the past century, in Chapter III and footnotes of his Preface, op. cit. Also see Hiltner's article, "The Psychological Understanding of Religion," in Readings in the Psychology of Religion, ed. Orlo Strunk, Jr. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), pp. 74-104.

<sup>3</sup>Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Living of These Days (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 213. In this book Fosdick states that in another of his works, namely, On Being A Real Person (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), "with all possibility of individual identification concealed, I have told some of the stories of human need that come to my 'confessional.'" (p. 220).



significance of having our inner being disclosed to a mature and understanding person. This is not a denial of, or substitute for, confession to God, but one human condition for aiding a full confession to God.<sup>1</sup>

And the present-day result of this renewed interest in confession for Protestant Seelsorge is, as Harry Emerson Fosdick, the "Minister Emeritus of all America," explains:

The confessional, which Protestantism threw out the door, is coming back through the window, in utterly new forms, to be sure, with new methods and with an entirely new intellectual explanation appropriate to the Protestant churches, but motivated by a real determination to help meet the inward problems of individuals.

Clergymen are giving different names to this form of activity, such as "trouble clinics," "personal conferences on spiritual problems," "the Protestant confessional." The name makes little difference. What does matter is the renewed awareness in the churches that they are in danger of surrendering to the psychoanalyst that vast field of human need where the confession of sin and spiritual misery is met with sympathetic and intelligent treatment. To be sure, a wise minister will work with a psychiatrist, not without one, but if the churches substitute any other kind of success for the successful handling of the spiritual aspects of individual problems, they will be vacating their most obvious function.<sup>2</sup>

#### Summary

Theology itself can helpfully be understood in terms of Randolph Crump Miller's simple definition as "the-truth-about-God-in-relation-to-man."<sup>3</sup> Hence, from the very

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Day Williams, The Minister and the Care of Souls (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 119f. (*Italics mine.*)

<sup>2</sup>John A. O'Brien, The Catholic Way of Life (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. 5.

outset, theology is concerned about the God-man relationship. Sin is that which violates this relationship, and confession of sin is the avenue of restoration. The significance of confession for theology is immense. Being rooted in the biblical doctrine of sin, confession of sin is the activity in which man humbles his creaturely pride before the divine justice of the Creator. Such confession involves the understanding of sin as not mere morality alone, but, on the deeper level of dynamics, as that which ruptures the loving relationship between God and man. Hence, sin can more meaningfully be understood as contained within the twin sides of unbelief and egocentricity.

Directly related to this conception of sin for ascertaining the significance of confession in theology is the doctrine of forgiveness. It is held in this study that forgiveness results, not because of any merit or good works accomplished by man, but solely by virtue of God's grace, which is made available for man's justification by personal faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the Gospel message itself, which biblical scholar C. H. Dodd claims is presented in its "locus classicus" by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15.<sup>1</sup> Then, as man confesses his sin in the process of the Christian life of repentance, he will begin to experience the true

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 13.

fulfillment of forgiveness. Such fulfillment stems not from selfish inward-moving egocentricity (which is actually dis-grace), but from the genuine humility occasioned by the actual grace of one's realization and acceptance of being possessed as a beloved child by his transcendent Heavenly Father. The doctrine of forgiveness involves the dynamic process of sanctification, requiring daily renewal. This is a growth process, fully realizing that finite man is weak and susceptible to all the temptations of earthly living, any number of which, for him, may be sin.

Therefore, the significance of confession for theology receives its clearest expression in the Pastoral Theology of Seelsorge, or the "Cure of Souls." This is the laboratory of reconciliation in which the doctrines of sin and forgiveness reach a dynamic encounter which is often vitally experienced by the penitent in the activity of confession. Such confession may not be formal, or even recognized actually to be confession as such, but it always includes the unburdening of man's anguished conscience in relation to God and fellow men so that the soul is freed of despair. Then, as man lays bare the personal weaknesses and defied responsibilities which have blocked and hindered his relationships, he experiences restoration from estrangement and loneliness, and is restored into loving and accepting relationship with God and man through the power of the Gospel of reconciliation.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONFESSION FOR PSYCHOLOGY

#### Background and Perspective

Psychology as a distinctive field of investigation is a relatively young science. Yet it has very deep roots in other disciplines. Robert S. Woodworth states, "As a part of philosophy, to be sure, it goes back to Plato and Aristotle."<sup>1</sup> In the field of religion it may be traced back even further, into the writings of the ancient Hebrew Old Testament prophets.<sup>2</sup> Its later and more precise structure in the religious sense may be found in the writings of the aforementioned Augustine (b. 354), for, as Charles F. Kemp holds, "It was Augustine who formulated and systematized the medieval principles of psychology that determined the content and scope of both theology and psychology for centuries. In fact, the two were one."<sup>3</sup> In this sense it

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<sup>1</sup>Robert S. Woodworth, Contemporary Schools of Psychology (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1948), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Especially Jeremiah. Supra, p. 21, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Kemp, op. cit., p. 33. For the purpose of this study it is significant to note that many--if not all--of Augustine's psychological insights grew out of his own intense personal struggles, which he relates so meaningfully in his Confessions. Historian Williston Walker describes Augustine's Confessions as "one of the most remarkable psychological discourses in all literature" (A Manual

may even be said that psychology arose out of theology. At any rate, "it has been truly said that psychology is the oldest and the youngest of the sciences, or as Ebbinghaus put it, it has a long past but only a short history."<sup>1</sup> The entire scope of psychology is suggested by the title of a work which chronicles its development, From Medicine Man to Freud.<sup>2</sup> Gregory Zilboorg's distinguished writing, A History of Medical Psychology, also includes a full 484 pages before coming to the work of Freud.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, while it must be recognized that Sigmund Freud made many contributions to psychology, there was much history before his work, and psychology has certainly developed significantly beyond him as well.

All in all, psychology has made a great impact upon the twentieth century. Its influence has been felt in every area of life to such a degree that Harry A. Overstreet asserts "the characteristic knowledge of our century of Church History, American Baptist Publication Society, 1933), p. 362.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 69f.

<sup>2</sup>Jan Ehrenwald, From Medicine Man to Freud (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1956). This is a comparatively "popular" treatment of the subject. For a more scholarly and detailed presentation, see the previously cited work by Bromberg, op. cit. For the distinctions of modern schools of psychology, see Woodworth, op. cit., and Ruth L. Munroe, Schools of Psychoanalytic Thought (New York: Dryden Press, 1955).

<sup>3</sup>Gregory Zilboorg, A History of Medical Psychology (New York: A. A. Norton & Co., Inc., 1941).

is psychological."<sup>1</sup> The specialty fields and sub-divisions of psychology are constantly expanding, as attested by the eleven divisions specified in the most current psychological dictionary.<sup>2</sup> However, for the purpose of this study psychology is understood as "a branch of science dealing with the behavior, acts, or mental processes, and with the mind, self, or person who behaves or acts or has the mental processes."<sup>3</sup> As such, psychology is an empirical science, in contrast with a philosophical discipline, and so is concerned with dynamic relationships. Further, psychology is a "helping" science, particularly in its clinical form, as it is concerned with alleviating human distress. It deals with the real people, the "human documents" (which is the very sensitive phrase of Anton T. Boisen<sup>4</sup>) of life in their loneliness and estrangement and seeks to restore them to wholeness and meaningful relationships. Hence, the therapeutic activity of confession has definite significance for psychology, especially as related to the concept of guilt.

### The Concept of Guilt

Leslie D. Weatherhead affirms, "In all

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<sup>1</sup>Harry A. Overstreet, The Mature Mind (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1949), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>English and English, op. cit., pp. 423-426.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

<sup>4</sup>Anton T. Boisen, The Exploration of the Inner World (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936), p. 250.

psychotherapeutic practice it is found that the sense of guilt plays a large part."<sup>1</sup> Of this fact there can be no doubt. The sense of guilt is defined as the "realization that one has violated ethical or moral or religious principles, together with a regretful feeling of lessened personal worth on that account."<sup>2</sup> Further, for the purpose of this study it is held that a sense of guilt implies relationships; that is, a hypothetical man born unattended on a desert island who lived his whole life in solitary ignorance of God and man would not feel guilt.<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest only that guilt is socially conditioned but, also, that guilt feelings themselves are consciously experienced in consequence of one's realization of his relationships.

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<sup>1</sup>Weatherhead, op. cit., p. 316.

<sup>2</sup>English and English, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>3</sup>This hypothetical example is deceptive and is used only to make a point. If the example is pushed, the question may be asked as to whether such a person who never knew other human contacts could actually be considered to be a man. In reply, Charles T. Holman answers: "He wouldn't be a man, for human nature is original nature with a very-large plus. He probably would most closely resemble the higher apes, with less strength, less native adaptation to the demands of jungle life, but more furtiveness and more cunning. He would not be a very admirable creature. He would lack language, and all that world of thoughts, hopes, purposes, and ideals, which constitute the values of our human life. These achievements of the long generations of human effort and adventure are mediated to the individual through contact with other personalities and the institutions which they have built up and in which their values are given embodiment. They are not an original endowment." The Cure of Souls (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 18.

It must then be asked more specifically, what causes man to feel this sense of guilt? The answer to this question involves the understanding of man's conscience. While the capacity for having a conscience may be God-given, the specific content of the individual's conscience is always learned. Walter Houston Clark explains: "This we know since there is no matter of conscience--say that which involves the Ten Commandments--which anthropologists have not found to differ from the Western norm among some of the peoples who live elsewhere on our globe."<sup>1</sup>

However, Gordon W. Allport advances a more cautious attitude toward the question of conscience formation. He agrees that the cultural relativity of conscience is great, yet feels that anthropologists may have overstated the case in that some qualities (e.g., kindness to children, a sense of justice) are prized by all peoples. He concludes:

Quite clearly specific ideas of what is right and wrong are not innate. Cultures are too variable; individuals are too variable. . . . At the same time, it is equally evident that the capacity for conscience exists in nearly every person. In the course of social living the individual is bound to form a conscience. Only in the very exceptional cases of what Lombroso called moral imbecility, and modern science sometimes calls "psychopathy," do feelings of right and wrong seem absent.<sup>2</sup>

When the question is asked as to how these feelings

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Houston Clark, The Psychology of Religion (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958), p.91.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon W. Allport, The Individual and His Religion (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1956), p. 87.



come about in the infant child, Charles T. Holman answers by stressing the influence of both the physical and social environments, and especially the "folkways" of the latter:

The new-born babe is no mere passive recipient of impressions made upon him. He is a bundle of impulses. There are inner urges driving him. There are organic hungers craving satisfaction. He cries, coos, grasps, sucks, sends out arms and legs in random movements. Some of his movements and activities receive gratifying responses; others receive checks and rebuffs. In some, therefore, he is encouraged and tries again; in others, he is discouraged, and these activities he tends to discontinue. And, as he grows up, this sort of interaction with his environment continues. He not only is born into a physical world which encourages some activities and discourages others; he is born into a social world which operates in the same way. He is born into a social group whose codes of behavior, whose "folkways" are rigidly established, and his spontaneous activities are encouraged or discouraged by gestures of approval or disapproval--some of them, of course, pretty vigorous gestures. He learns slowly, pleasantly, and painfully, until at last the ways of the group are his ways too.<sup>1</sup>

Clark narrows the focus of the origin of guilt feelings within the social environment by centering upon the early influence upon the child of his parents, or their substitutes. He stresses the process of identification which the child comes to feel with his parents, including their ideals and wishes for him.

In the ethical and religious areas this occurs most importantly sometime between the ages of three and six, though of course the child does not understand the implications of what he is taught, nor is he able to reflect on the material. Indeed the strength of his feelings of conscience is partly dependent on this lack of understanding. Of course he may identify himself with people other than parents, and groups other than

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<sup>1</sup>Holman, op. cit., pp. 18f.

the family; his teachers or his playmates, for example. The teachings and the attitudes of these others will modify his conscience and even influence his overt behavior to a marked degree. But the influence of the family will never be wholly erased. Long after the faces of his father and his mother have faded from his sight their silent influence will still be reflected in the conscience of the old man.<sup>1</sup>

The subtle process in which the child identifies and assimilates within himself his parents' voice of authority is of central significance for the personal internalization of conscience. Allport, in another writing, cites an excellent example of this process, as suggested to him by Henry A. Murray:

A three-year-old boy awoke at six in the morning and started his noisy play. The father, sleepy-eyed, went to the boy's room and sternly commanded him, "Get back into bed and don't you dare get up until seven o'clock." The boy obeyed. For a few minutes all was quiet, but soon there were strange sounds that led the father again to look into the room. The boy was in bed as ordered; but putting an arm over the edge, he jerked it back in, saying, "Get back in there." Next a leg protruded, only to be roughly retracted with the warning, "You heard what I told you." Finally the boy rolled to the very edge of the bed and then roughly rolled back, sternly warning himself, "Not until seven o'clock!" We could not wish for a clearer instance of interiorizing the father's role as a means to self-control and socialized becoming.<sup>2</sup>

The result of such interiorization as in the boy above is the principal development of what Erich Fromm calls the "authoritarian conscience." Fromm defines this as "the voice of an internalized external authority, the

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<sup>1</sup>Clark, op. cit., pp. 91f.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon W. Allport, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Science of Personality (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 70.

parents, the state, or whoever the authorities in a culture happen to be."<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this study, God's laws should also be included as one of the voices of external authority. The point is that the individual either consciously or unconsciously adopts as his own the religious, ethical and moral laws, prohibitions, and sanctions of the "significant others" in his environment. To the degree that they are genuinely internalized and assimilated, these laws of external authorities truly become part of oneself, as it were, and instead of feeling responsible to something outside oneself, the individual feels responsible to something inside: his own conscience. "Good conscience is consciousness of pleasing the (external and internalized) authority: guilty conscience is the consciousness of displeasing it."<sup>2</sup>

But, when one's Authoritarian Conscience is over-developed, as Clark warns, "it is characterized by extreme rigidity, and its violation by an overwhelming sense of guilt that will hamper the creative development of his personality."<sup>3</sup> Fromm recognized the immature nature of the Authoritarian Conscience alone and advanced another form of conscience, which he called the "Humanistic Conscience." He contrasted this conscience with the former, claiming

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Fromm, Man For Himself (New York: Reinhart & Co., Inc., 1947), pp. 143f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 146.    <sup>3</sup>Clark, op. cit., p. 92.

that it is not the internalized voice of an external authority, but, rather, is man's own voice, made up of elements spontaneously developed by the individual, appropriate to his unique abilities and essential to his creativity.

More specifically:

Humanistic conscience is the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or dysfunctioning; not a reaction to the functioning of this or that capacity but to the totality of capacities which constitute our human and our individual existence.<sup>1</sup>

Fromm holds that man's humanistic conscience judges his function as a human being in the art of living. As such it is actually "knowledge within oneself." Yet this knowledge is more than mere abstract thought, as it also has an "affective quality," which is the reaction of man's total personality. Hence, when man's actions, thoughts, and feelings are conducive to the proper functioning of his total personality, he has a "good conscience." Conversely, when such are not conducive to his total personality, man has a "guilty conscience." "It is the voice of our true selves which summons us back to ourselves, to live productively, to develop fully and harmoniously--that is, to become what we potentially are."<sup>2</sup>

It must be recognized that, according to Fromm, man's Authoritarian and Humanistic Consciences are both present: "They are, of course, not separated in reality

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<sup>1</sup>Fromm, op. cit., p. 158.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

nor mutually exclusive in any one person. On the contrary, actually everybody has both 'consciences.' The problem is to distinguish their respective strength and their inter-relation."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the development of both consciences in their appropriate degrees is necessary if the individual is to realize his full potential.

It is essential to acknowledge that the dynamics of conscience are dynamic: that is, they change as the individual moves towards maturity. Consequently, as Fromm's concept of a humanistic conscience suggests, it is a mistake to understand that conscience is only a lingering vestige of parental coercion and childhood fear. Such influences are definitely heavy in conscience formation, but with the growth of the individual personality the "you must do this" of parental injunctions becomes genuinely assimilated by the self-governing healthy adult so that it is transformed into "I ought to do this" with the conscious acceptance of mature responsibility. Allport explains this transformation as the result of individually accepted adult values:

Not everything that was once a "must" of the super-ego becomes an "ought" of the mature conscience. The latter no longer depends upon the enforced teaching of parent or nurse, but upon the values that maturity holds--and in most respects these differ sharply from the values of early childhood. Psychotherapists, it is true, sometimes discover troublesome vestiges of infantile conscience plaguing mature life. But their very

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

concern with these vestiges proves that adult conscience is expected to have adult stature and to escape entirely from the habit-structure of early childhood. Like all other ingredients of personality, conscience is expected to keep pace with the individual's age and experience. It helps to relate the person to reality as he now conceives it. It is a present guide to conduct, and as such, serves an important function in the economy and health of an adult life. Hence in the normal personality it may not be viewed as a carry-over from childhood, a parentally imposed super-ego. Functionally autonomous of its roots, it is now arbiter of adult values.<sup>1</sup>

Significant to note in this connection is Allport's statement: "Conscience is by no means exclusively a religious phenomenon. We know many irreligious people who have acute consciences. . . . Conscience is the indicator of the measure of agreement between our conduct and our values, whatever they may be."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to recognize that, for example, there may also be a "civic" conscience, a "professional" conscience, a "scientific" conscience, an "artistic" conscience, and even an "underworld," or criminals only, code. Yet it should not be assumed, therefore, that conscience is fragmented, or even necessarily in conflict. Rather, the well-organized personality will have established his values in a hierarchical scale of importance which will mitigate confusion. Further:

As if further to diminish discord, our keenest feelings of guilt are prompted only by violations of the highest sentiments in our personal hierarchy. Conduct out of

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<sup>1</sup>Allport, The Individual and His Religion, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 90. (Italics mine.)

line with a minor sentiment troubles us little, while deviations from the principal highway of our lives are marked by a sense of guilt, provided, of course, these deviations are felt to be willful and not due merely to the force of circumstances over which we have no control.<sup>1</sup>

Holman is in substantial agreement with Allport, but with an optimistic suggestion. He has a more social emphasis, and sees the maturing self as hopefully making a critical evaluation of previous externally imposed standards, with a new formulation resulting, possibly with even loftier standards:

Conscience, the sense of "oughtness," does not necessarily remain attached forever only to those forms of conduct approved by an individual's primary groups. As a result of contact with other groups, or some other form of stimulation, a man may be led to a critical evaluation of codes thus transmitted to him. He may achieve loftier standards. In that case, conscience will demand that he maintain those standards. Conscience does not give intuitive insight into right and wrong. The determination of the better or the worse requires high intelligence, it calls for critical evaluation of forms of conduct in terms of probable social consequences. But conscience attaches itself to those standards of conduct which to the individual seem most highly approvable, and demands that they be maintained.<sup>2</sup>

The above suggestion of Holman appears to be quite naive, and contrary to empirical evidence. For, rather than reach loftier standards when exposed to social groups, usually the exact opposite is true, with lowered standards resulting. Of course, it is entirely possible that some group stimulation, as from a religious fellowship, may

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.    <sup>2</sup>Holman, op. cit., p. 37.

occasion higher levels--but even such a rise might be more accurately explained in terms of the spiritual, social, and emotional needs which religion filled than by the "high intelligence," or rational criteria, which Holman advances.

For the purpose of this study it can be seen from the foregoing that the conscience is the incubator in which guilt is formed, and, as it were, hatched. Conscience is universal in the human race, being slowly acquired through the processes of learning in childhood and adolescence, with its content subject to cultural variability. An appropriately functioning conscience itself is needful, both for individual mental health and integrity, as well as general civil law and order in society as a whole. Yet, understandably, conflicts arise when the "must nots" and "ought nots" of conscience are violated by human behavior, --and guilt is the result.

There are many different ways in which guilt can be understood, and/or described, and/or classified. Ernest White sees at least three distinct meanings which need to be distinguished: legal guilt, theological guilt, and psychological guilt.<sup>1</sup> The first two are objective, in the sense that they refer to overt acts of transgression of the law, whether human or divine, and which, incidentally, are not necessarily the same. The third type, psychological

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest White, Christian Life and the Unconscious (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 153f.



guilt, is subjective, and has little quantitative relation to the former categories. It consists of the feeling that a man has when his conscience condemns him, and so may or may not be based in actual fact.

In contrast, Henry Guntrip recognizes only two forms of guilt: rational guilt, and morbid depressive and persecutory guilt.<sup>1</sup> He holds that rational guilt is a reaction of sorrow and shame over a specific wrong which was actually committed. On the other hand, morbid depressive and persecutory guilt is not over actual deeds, but of deeds done in unconscious fantasy. In addition,

It is a persisting reaction to a persisting internal danger, namely the outbreak of violently aggravated unconscious needs. Morbid guilt is an unremitting self-attack designed to forestall the commission of specific anti-social acts by crushing out all free and spontaneous vital activity. It is as if it aims to prevent our doing wrong by preventing our doing anything at all, and it can, in melancholia, reduce the personality to total immobility. But in a deeper sense it aims to perpetuate the repression of our internal bad objects, as if it were aroused by a sense of our keeping bad company in the unconscious. It involves a turning against ourselves, at deep psychic levels, of the aggression we feel against the emotionally bad side of parents.<sup>2</sup>

The aspect of such guilt which Guntrip describes as "turning against ourselves" stems from what Freud described as a "Death Instinct."<sup>3</sup> According to Freud's

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Guntrip, Psychotherapy and Religion (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Freud held that "there are two fundamentally different kinds of instincts, the sexual instincts in the

theory, "there exist from the beginning in all of us strong propensities toward self-destruction and these come to fruition as actual suicide only in exceptional cases where many circumstances and factors combine to make it possible."<sup>1</sup> This theory was applied "mainly to psychoneuroses and psychoses."<sup>2</sup> Yet it has been far from generally accepted, and remains controversial even among Freud's most fervent followers.

widest sense of the word (Eros, if you prefer that name) and the aggressive instincts, whose aim is destruction" in New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1933), p. 141. The association and opposition of these two forces--Eros (sexual) or life, and aggression or death--create the phenomena of existence. The death instinct expresses itself as an instinct of destruction directed against the external world, or inwardly, against man himself, in Freud's thought. This formulation leads Patrick Mullahy to comment: "Thus, Freud finally worked out a theoretical explanation for his almost unmitigated conviction of the inherent evilness of man," in Oedipus: Myth and Complex (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1948), p. 35. Such thinking appears, in essence, to be surprisingly close to Christianity's concept of Original Sin! For further discussion from Freud on the Death Instinct, see his The Ego and the Id (London: The Hogarth Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 56, and Civilization and Its Discontents (London: The Hogarth Press, Ltd., 1955), pp. 97f. The death instinct has also become known by the term Thanatos, but, according to Freud's leading biographer, Ernest Jones, "Freud himself never, except in conversation, used for the death instinct the term Thanatos, one which has become so popular since," The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. III (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1957), p. 273. For additional discussion on the death instinct, see Franz Alexander, Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1948), pp. 63-70, and Herman Feifel (ed.), The Meaning of Death (New York: The McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959).

<sup>1</sup>Karl Menninger, Man Against Himself (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1938), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander, op. cit., p. 68.

An outstanding American psychiatrist, Karl A. Menninger, who is not uncritical of Freud in general, does accept this death instinct theory and has elaborated on it thoroughly in his work, Man Against Himself.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that Menninger sees many, if not all, of man's self-destructive tendencies as basically stemming from guilt feelings. He indicates that this has often been evident in the history of Christian martyrdom and ascetism,<sup>2</sup> in the inferiority feelings of alcoholics,<sup>3</sup> and even as feeling guilty over experiencing success!<sup>4</sup> He further states:

The sense of guilt is particularly liable to become evident in connection with violations of sexual conventions. . . . Indeed, I am convinced from my observations that even venereal disease is sometimes acquired partly because the victim invites the infection, not only by his behavior (e.g., carelessness), but by some unknown subtle modification of tissue resistance.<sup>5</sup>

Menninger claims that such guilt is often unconscious and may become converted to physical symptoms such as eye diseases resulting from seeing something forbidden, as in voyeurism. He goes on to state that in severe forms

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<sup>1</sup>Menninger, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 77ff. Menninger claims that the ascetic Simeon Stylites especially evidenced his aggression in his extreme bodily penances and thirty years of pillar-sitting (pp. 113f.). In this connection also see Theodor Reik, Masochism in Modern Man (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1941), pp. 343ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 156.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 321. In Menninger's earlier work, The Human Mind (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930) he cites detailed illustrations of such conversion (pp. 327-333).

of mental illness, such as a manic-depressive psychosis, the guilt experienced may be so extreme that tensions can be relaxed only by psychic dynamics amounting to at least a partial destruction or paralysis of conscience itself.<sup>1</sup> It is Menninger's conclusion that in the last analysis, every neurosis and psychosis must be considered as a partial suicide involving guilt feelings.

A. H. Maslow and Bela Mittelmann stress that unconscious guilt is often present in people suffering from depression, melancholia, and manic-depressive psychosis.<sup>2</sup> The guilt and accompanying fear are felt to be so dangerous and threatening that they are repressed in defense by the tormented individual.

He represses them for several reasons. He wants to protect himself against the feared consequences of these impulses; he can do this even more by shutting his feelings of fear and guilt out of awareness. Further, these latter feelings are extremely distressing, sometimes actually incapacitating. The patient tries to attain a state of comfort and to maintain his ability to function by repressing them.<sup>3</sup>

Leslie D. Weatherhead offers an additional three-part classification for guilt which is especially helpful for the psychologist and the pastoral counselor: (1) Normal Guilt; (2) Exaggerated Conscious Guilt; and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Maslow and Mittelmann, op. cit., pp. 503, 566.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

(3) Repressed Guilt.<sup>1</sup> He describes "Normal Guilt" as "like that degree of pain which tells us that something is wrong. It is a valuable warning."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, such guilt is helpful--even needful--for healthy living. For, when considering the relationship between normal guilt and the theological category of sin, this guilt may understandably result from man's realistic perception of being out of relationship with God. The helpful aspect of such guilt, then, follows upon the individual's realization of his estrangement, when his motivation for moving towards reconciliation is clarified. On the other hand, "Exaggerated Conscious Guilt" is defined as "an overwhelming sense of shame and an intolerable burden following some peccadillo or incident, the guilt of which the patient has exaggerated all out of proportion."<sup>3</sup> As this definition implies, such exaggerated guilt is definitely unrealistic, and an individual's tendencies to relate such guilt to sin will be similarly out of proportion. Exaggerated guilt is nearly always neurotic in nature, taking as possible manifestations all manner of extreme behavior from hand-washing compulsions (which may or may not be conscious) to silence, as evidenced by the following newspaper item:

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<sup>1</sup>Weatherhead, op. cit., pp. 328-330.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

## "SILENT FOR 30 YEARS

"Reb Frommer did not speak a word or utter a sound for thirty years. This remarkable penance was self-imposed. It seems that Frommer, in an outburst of temper, cursed his newly-wedded wife, who soon after met with a violent death which Frommer feared was brought about by his abuse.

"He was a celebrated local character of Czortkow, Poland, and when he died in 1928, the newspapers of Germany and Poland repeated again the story of his life and of the strange vow that he never broke."<sup>1</sup>

Weatherhead's third category is "Repressed Guilt" in which "the feelings of guilt have been so objectionable to consciousness that they have been repressed into the unconscious. The incident that caused the guilt is 'forgotten.'"<sup>2</sup> It is this form of guilt--repressed guilt--which is of central importance for psychology. The mental mechanism of repression was held by Freud to be an ego defense or a form of "resistance, which comes from the persistent, automatic, normative tendency of the ego to try to control dangerous tendencies by blocking them off."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the treatment of repression was felt by Freud to be so important that he claimed, "The theory of repression is the pillar upon which the edifice of psychoanalysis rests."<sup>4</sup>

When guilt is repressed, or banished into the

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<sup>1</sup>Menninger, The Human Mind, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup>Weatherhead, op. cit., p. 331.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Menninger, Theory of Psychoanalytic Technique (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1958), p. 105.

<sup>4</sup>Sigmund Freud, "History of the Psychoanalytical Movement," in The Basic Writings, p. 939.

unconscious, it may set up great mental conflict and distress. The burden of such guilt may become so intolerable that it is pushed on to the body, converting its disharmony into some physical symptom which becomes the basis for a psychosomatic illness.<sup>1</sup> If such guilt feelings remain in the unconscious the conflicts may become so anxiety provoking that neurosis results. In fact, Rollo May, writing in his The Meaning of Anxiety, specifically states: "It is our observation that there is generally a considerable amount of guilt feeling, often very subtle but generally pervasive, involved in the inner conflict which underlies neurotic anxiety."<sup>2</sup> O. Hobart Mowrer has even advanced a "guilt-theory" of anxiety, which is explained in that "anxiety is a product 'not of too little self-indulgence and satisfaction . . . but of irresponsibility, guilt, immaturity.'"<sup>3</sup> There is no doubt, then, that conflicts form a breeding ground for guilt. Karen Horney explains that the kind, scope, and intensity of such conflicts are largely socially influenced by the culture in which people live,

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<sup>1</sup>In this connection see Gotthard Booth, "Basic Concepts of Psychosomatic Medicine," in Healing: Human and Divine, ed. Simon Doniger (New York: Association Press, 1957), pp. 41ff.

<sup>2</sup>Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), p. 333 (n.). See also Charleen Schwartz, Neurotic Anxiety (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), for a Roman view.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 108. Mowrer's position is treated more fully in Chapter V, infra, pp. 261f.

as one loyalty may interfere with another, and personal desires may stand in opposition to obligations to the group:

If the civilization is in a stage of rapid transition, where highly contradictory values and divergent ways of living exist side by side, the choices the individual has to make are manifold and difficult. He can conform to the expectations of the community or be a dissenting individualist, be gregarious or live as a recluse, worship success or despise it, have faith in strict discipline for children or allow them to grow up without much interference; he can believe in a different moral standard for men and women or hold that the same should apply for both, regard sexual relations as an expression of human intimacy or divorce them from ties of affection; he can foster racial discrimination or take the stand that human values are independent of the color of skin or the shape of noses--and so on and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

Conflicts ultimately arise with regard to the above choices when, due to the pressure of some situation, individuals are driven to take a position. Prior to that time, they often tend to vacillate unconsciously between various alternatives. "The striking fact is that most people are not aware of them, and consequently do not resolve them by any clear decision."<sup>2</sup> When a specific choice is required, the door is open for all manner of conflicts to formulate, both consciously and unconsciously.

The pain of psychic conflict is in no wise limited to those suffering from mental illness. Rather, such

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<sup>1</sup>Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1945), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



conflicts are more nearly a characteristic of our anxious age itself. Modern man is generally very much aware of something gone wrong. He would have difficulty in clearly spelling out the factors in the conflict, but he feels the tensions and the pain of conscience which cause him to be lonely and estranged. Paul Tillich affirms this existential anxiety in that: "A profound ambiguity between good and evil permeates everything he does, because it permeates his personal being as such. . . . The awareness of this ambiguity is the feeling of guilt."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, dynamic psychology has revealed that, in Freud's words, man has a "perennial, unconscious sense of guilt," which is, seemingly, an inevitable accompaniment of finitude.<sup>2</sup> But much of man's guilt feelings are conscious, or are capable of becoming so, and this situation underscores the significance of confession. For, as Paul E. Johnson says concerning guilt, "there is no cure without confession."<sup>3</sup>

### The Concept of Confession

Modern psychology discovered the value of confession only by accident. When Sigmund Freud took his medical training, graduating in 1881, and even after he began his

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<sup>1</sup>Tillich, The Courage to Be, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Gregory Zilboorg, Mind, Medicine and Man (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1943), p. 326.

<sup>3</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), p. 121.

early practice as a neurologist, its significance was unrecognized. Instead, as A. A. Brill describes the scene:

It was the age of physical therapy, when physicians knew nothing about the psychic factors in disease, when everything was judged by the formula, Mens sana in corpore sano (a healthy mind in a healthy body). Every symptom was explained on the basis of some organic lesion, and if nothing physical was discovered, it was assumed that there must be something in the brain to account for the disturbance. The treatment was based on this same deficient understanding; drugs, hydrotherapy, and electrotherapy were the only agents that physicians could use. When the patient was excited, he received some sedative; if he was depressed and felt fatigue, he was given a tonic; and when drugs failed, electricity or cold baths were recommended. All these remedies gave only temporary alleviation, mainly through suggestion. Most of the thoughtful physicians were fully cognizant of this helpless state, but there was nothing else to be done.<sup>1</sup>

Into this situation came Freud, bearing the influence of one of the significant teachers of his life, Jean Martin Charcot. Freud had studied in Charcot's clinic in Paris for one year and was greatly impressed by Charcot's use of hypnotism. Hypnotism was not a new discovery, but it was controversial, and Charcot's work made it a legitimate medical technique. Indeed, Charcot was, as Bromberg comments, "the pivotal figure around which hypnosis underwent its scientific renaissance."<sup>2</sup>

During the first few years of his private practice Freud relied mostly upon hypnotism and electrotherapy. He

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<sup>1</sup>A. A. Brill, "Introduction," in The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Bromberg, op. cit., p. 182.

shortly discarded the latter, however, as it was too primitive and failed to help the patient. He continued working with hypnosis, recognizing its weaknesses (e.g., not every patient could be hypnotized, and even those who could did not remain permanently cured), and so continually experimenting with its usage. Eventually Freud gave up hypnosis, too, but later acknowledged, "The importance of hypnotism for the history of the development of psychoanalysis must not be too lightly estimated. Both in theoretical as well as in therapeutic aspects, psychoanalysis is the administrator of the estate left by hypnotism."<sup>1</sup>

The reason behind the above statement from Freud is found in his association with Josef Breuer, a well-known general practitioner who was some fourteen years older than Freud. They had become friends while Freud was still studying, and Breuer had shared with him an account of a very interesting case of hysteria which he had cured by hypnosis from 1880 to 1882. This was the famous case of "Anna O.," a twenty-one year old girl who had developed a long series of symptoms (e.g., paralysis of three limbs, disturbances of sight and speech, inability to eat, distressing nervous cough, etc.) in connection with her father's fatal illness. Most significant was the presence of two distinct states of consciousness, or a case of double personality. As Jones explains:

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<sup>1</sup>Brill, loc. cit.

The transition from one to the other was marked by a phase of autohypnosis from which she would awake clear and mentally normal. This phase happened by luck to be the time when Breuer visited her, and she soon got into the habit of relating to him the disagreeable events of the day, including terrifying hallucinations, after which she felt relief. On one occasion she related the details of the first appearance of a particular symptom and, to Breuer's great astonishment, this resulted in its complete disappearance. Perceiving the value of doing so, the patient continued with one symptom after another, terming the procedure "the talking cure" or "chimney sweeping."<sup>1</sup>

Through an accidental observation Breuer had discovered that Anna O. could be freed from disturbances of consciousness if she could be enabled to give verbal expression to the affective phantasies which dominated her. The significance of the case lay in the fact that in her waking state Anna O. knew nothing about the origin of her symptoms, but once hypnotized, she immediately knew the connection between her symptoms and her past experiences during the time she had nursed her father.

A common feature of all the symptoms consisted in the fact that they had come into existence in situations in which an impulse to do something had to be foregone because other motives suppressed it. The symptom appeared as a substitute for the unperformed act. As a rule, the symptom was not the result of one single "traumatic" scene, but of a sum of many similar situations. If the patient in a state of hypnosis recalled hallucinatorily the act which she had suppressed in the past, and if she now brought it to conclusion under the stress of a freely generated affect, the symptom was wiped away never to return again.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. I (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1953), pp. 223f.

<sup>2</sup>Brill, op. cit., p. 7.

Freud was fascinated by this case from Breuer, and, in testing Breuer's method in his own practice, he found definite confirmation of its efficacy. Freud always credited Breuer with the discovery of this treatment, although they differed from the very beginning in their basic interpretation of the symptoms, Freud finding a large sexual repression. They issued a joint report of the procedure in 1893. For the purpose of this study it is highly significant that Freud and Breuer "called their treatment the 'cathartic method' because they concluded that the efficacy of it rested on the mental and emotional purging, catharsis, which the patient went through during the treatment."<sup>1</sup> Also very significant is the fact that this concept for the first time showed the importance of distinguishing between conscious and unconscious states, which distinction was later to hold such a prominent place in Freud's psychology of the unconscious. New meaning was given to the emotional factors of life, their fluctuations and dynamics.

The cure or the discharge was effected through what the authors called the process of abreaction. The hypnotized patient was led back to the repressed episodes and allowed to give free vent in speech and action to the feelings which were originally kept out of consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

In this connection, "to ab-react literally means to re-act or work off something repressed, thereby unburdening oneself

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

of unconscious, strangulated feelings."<sup>1</sup> Hence, in this early work of Breuer and Freud the experience of confession, whether seen as "catharsis," or "abreaction," is recognized as having tremendous therapeutic effect in alleviating crippling mental pressures in the process of making conscious the unconscious. It is to be noted, however, that in such unburdening activity Freud was not at all concerned with the moral, ethical, or religious implications of such "confessions." Rather, his interest was solely in the meaning which such hidden (repressed or suppressed) material had for the psychic life of the individual.

As he developed his therapeutic procedures, Freud continued to find difficulties with hypnosis. So, as has been noted, he eventually discarded it, replacing it with free association. This is also confession of a sort, in which the patient is urged to tell everything which comes to mind, leaving out nothing, regardless of whether he considers it important or not. Freud told patients to give up all conscious reflection, to let themselves go in calm concentration, following their spontaneous mental occurrences, and imparting everything to him. In this way Freud hoped to obtain the free association which led to the origin of the symptoms. This led to further developments.

As he developed this method, he found that it was not as simple as he had thought, that these so-called free

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

associations were really not free, but were determined by unconscious material which had to be analyzed and interpreted. He therefore designated this new technique psychoanalysis. The cathartic method, however, was ever preserved as a sort of nucleus of psychoanalysis despite the expansions and modifications which Freud gradually made as he proceeded with the new technique.<sup>1</sup>

Freud continued to develop theories pertaining to psychology and psychoanalysis to his death in 1939. Those having to do with the Oedipus Complex and the interpretation of dreams are especially significant. Concerning the former, Freud even went so far as to say, "The nucleus of all neuroses as far as our present knowledge of them goes in the Oedipus complex."<sup>2</sup> Further, for the purposes of this study, "conscience and morality arose through overcoming, desexualizing the Oedipus-complex."<sup>3</sup> In making these statements Freud was referring to Sophocles' account of Oedipus Rex, which he summarizes in that:

You all know the Greek myth of King Oedipus, whose destiny it was to slay his father and to wed his mother, who did all in his power to avoid the fate prophesied by the oracle, and who in self-punishment blinded

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," in Basic Writings, p. 927. For further discussion on the Oedipus complex, see Freud's Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), Chapter VII, and The Ego and the Id, pp. 40-48.

<sup>3</sup>Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem in Masochism," in Collected Papers (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924), II, 266.

himself when he discovered that in ignorance he had committed both these crimes.<sup>1</sup>

The Oedipus complex, then, refers to the infant's sexual attraction to his parent of the opposite sex, with accompanying ambivalent feelings toward the parent of his own sex.

Freud held that the Oedipus complex is the source of man's sense of guilt.<sup>2</sup> He elaborated this theory by relating his concept to the work of W. Robertson Smith concerning the totem-feast of primitive peoples.<sup>3</sup> Herman Nunberg describes this elaboration:

Freud supposes that in the primal horde the father was murdered, dismembered and devoured by the sons. Having perpetrated this act they were seized with a longing for the father whom they had thus lost. This longing was converted into dread of the community, which is another term for the sense of guilt.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (New York: PermaBooks, 1955), pp. 339f.

<sup>2</sup>Freud held that the Oedipus complex was universally experienced. However, Clara Thompson states, "Anthropological research has clearly shown now that the Oedipus complex as it is described by Freud is not universal but is a product of monogamous patriarchal society," in her Psychoanalysis: Evolution and Development (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1957), pp. 38f. In this connection see also Edward Westermarck, Three Essays on Sex and Marriage (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1934), and Bronislaw Malinowski, Sex and Repression in Savage Society (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927).

<sup>3</sup>W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (London: Publisher unknown, 1907).

<sup>4</sup>Herman Nunberg, Practice and Theory of Psychoanalysis (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs, 1948), p. 89.



Also pertaining to this process is Freud's "Anatomy of the Mental Personality," which distinguishes in man's mind an Ego, Id, and Super-Ego.<sup>1</sup> As Nunberg continues to relate this primitive sense of guilt to the individual he explains:

The father is absorbed into the ego (introjected), from which he is then differentiated as the ego-ideal or superego. The attitude of the ego to the superego is then analogous to the former attitude of the son to the father. In the main the superego imposes inhibitions upon the ego. The superego is formed by way of identification, a process which genetically has developed from the oral phase of libidinal organization.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, pp. 82-112. It is interesting to note that in a more recent work building upon Freud's three-part mental anatomy, Franz Alexander differs with him by making a distinction between an unconscious superego (the archaic conscience) and a conscious ego-ideal. "The latter contains values accepted in later life which govern conduct. The superego is acquired early and remains unconscious, functions automatically, and is not easily changed by later corrective influences," (Alexander, op. cit., p. 83). For the purpose of this study, Paul Pruyser has cited the application of Alexander's above distinction as made by G. Piers and M. B. Singer in indicating the difference between guilt and shame: "In guilt feelings there is a conflict between the ego and the super-ego. . . . Guilt feelings are a particular form of anxiety in which atonement is sought for deeds done. The sting in this anxiety is the fear of punishment, ultimately in the form of mutilation of one's body. In feelings of shame, on the other hand, a conflict between the ego and the ego-ideal is postulated. . . . Conflicts between ego and ego-ideal lead to feelings that a goal has not been reached, that one has failed to live up to one's own best standards. There is an experience of failure, felt as shame. The sting in shame is a fear of contempt and exposure, ultimately the fear of abandonment," (Paul W. Pruyser, "Nathan and David: A Psychological Footnote," Pastoral Psychology, XIII, No. 121, (February, 1962), p. 16). It is Pruyser's contention in this article that the prophet Nathan used the mechanism of shame (as defined by Piers), as opposed to guilt, in his dealing with King David (supra, pp. 16f.).

<sup>2</sup>Nunberg, loc. cit.

The Freudian Super-Ego, then, is, roughly, man's conscience, the formation of which was previously discussed.<sup>1</sup> It acts as a censor upon the Ego, with guilt resulting. Freud explains that the normal conscious sense of guilt "is due to tension between the ego and the ego-ideal [i.e., super-ego] and is the expression of a condemnation of the ego pronounced by its criticizing function."<sup>2</sup>

Freud goes on to state that the sense of guilt is strongly conscious in such maladies as obsessional neurosis and melancholia. And

analysis shows that the super-ego is being influenced by processes that have remained hidden from the ego. It is possible to discover the repressed impulses which really occasion the sense of guilt. The super-ego is thus proved to have known more than the ego about the unconscious id.<sup>3</sup>

In this framework Freud understands the Ego, Super-Ego, and Id to all be in a relationship of tension. The conscious ego, however, feels the brunt of the tensions, as it is menaced by dangers from three directions: "from the external world, from the libido [i.e., sexual energy, or "pleasure-striving force of a certain qualitative character"<sup>4</sup>] of the id, and from the severity of the super-ego."<sup>5</sup> Freud also sees three kinds of anxiety resulting from these

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 133-141.

<sup>2</sup>Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 74. <sup>4</sup>Mullahy, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 82.

three dangers, "since anxiety is the expression of a recoil from danger."<sup>1</sup> The result of all this is, for the conscious ego:

Like the dweller in a borderland that it is, the ego tries to mediate between the world and the id, to make the id comply with the world's demands and, by means of muscular activity, to accommodate the world to the id's desires. . . . It is not only the ally of the id; it is also a submissive slave who courts the love of his master. . . . Its position midway between the id and reality tempts it only too often to become sycophantic, opportunist and false, like a politician who sees the truth but wants to keep his place in popular favour.<sup>2</sup>

In Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, then, he committed himself to the side of the Ego, with its capabilities for conscious reasoning, as opposed to the wild and destructive Id and the tyrannizing Super-Ego. He specifically stated that the object of psychoanalysis "is to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of vision, and so to extend its organisation that it can take over new portions of the id. Where id was, there shall ego be."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Albert Outler even describes the statement, "Where id was, there let ego be," as "a short form of the Freudian gospel."<sup>4</sup>

For the purpose of this study, in the process of moving towards this end Freud takes guilt very seriously.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 83.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Freud, New Introductory Lectures, pp. 111f.

<sup>4</sup>Albert C. Outler, Psychotherapy and the Christian Message (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 81.

While he has a definite biological orientation and does not stress the activity of confession, per se, he emphasizes that conscious guilt is relieved by the process of catharsis and abreaction.<sup>1</sup> Even more important for his therapy is unconscious guilt, which Freud held could be treated through the interpretation of dreams.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, he considered the guilt evidenced in dreams to be immensely important.

Freud made this very clear when he asked the question, "Must one assume responsibility for the content of one's dreams?" and answered by declaring, "Obviously one must hold oneself responsible for the evil impulses of one's dreams. In what other way can one deal with them?"<sup>3</sup>

In specifically facing the question of how to deal with the unconscious sense of guilt, Freud commented, "Nothing can be done against it directly, and nothing indirectly but the slow procedure of unmasking its unconscious repressed roots, and of thus gradually changing it into a conscious sense of guilt."<sup>4</sup> Hence, Freud sought to make conscious the unconscious sense of guilt as well. But he was frank to admit that this was often exceedingly difficult. "It depends upon the intensity of the guilt; there is often no

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 154-155.

<sup>2</sup>Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams," in The Basic Writings, is one of his most significant theoretical and biographical works.

<sup>3</sup>Bonthius, op. cit., pp. 195f.

<sup>4</sup>Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 72 (n.).

counteracting force of similar strength which the treatment can put in motion against it."<sup>1</sup> It is significant to note in connection with the difficulty involved in the treatment of unconscious guilt that perhaps the pastoral counselor has even more effective resources available to him than he realizes. Many of the symbols of religion, such as the sacraments and liturgy, contain healing elements with pronounced unconscious appeal, and these might well serve as the "counteracting force" which Freud saw as being needed.

Freud saw yet another problem involved in the treatment of unconscious guilt, that being the requirement that the therapist remain detached and aloof from his patient, rather than engaging in a more obvious alignment with the patient's super-ego. While such a deliberate authority role would serve to make unconscious guilt more manifest, it would also involve the temptation for the analyst to play the part of a savior or redeemer to the patient. Freud concluded, "Since the rules of analysis are diametrically opposed to the physician's making use of his personality in any such manner, it must be honestly confessed that here we have another limitation to the effectiveness of analysis."<sup>2</sup> However, the pastoral counselor is under no similar restriction, and his role as man of God in a definitely super-ego association gives him an especially

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

effective position from which to pronounce God's word of forgiveness in dealing with unconscious guilt. Yet the pastoral use of such authority must be exercised with great caution, as an insensitive representation of this power might actually result in unconscious guilt being "bound" rather than "loosed." At the same time it is recognized that precisely because the Freudian analyst maintains his detached and aloof role, he is at a distinct advantage in working through the analysis of dreams and free association which may be the most important level in dealing with unconscious guilt in many people.

The most prominent of Freud's many disciples was Carl Gustav Jung. He was born in 1875 (the son of a Swiss Protestant pastor) and so was some nineteen years Freud's junior. The two men first met in 1907, and were very favorably attracted to each other. Jones even states that Freud "soon decided that Jung was to be his successor and at times called him his 'son and heir.'"<sup>1</sup> Indeed, with Freud's approval Jung was even made the first president of the International Psycho-Analytic Association in 1910.<sup>2</sup> However, Freud and Jung had personal and theoretical differences which resulted in their parting company in 1912.

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1955), II, 33. It should also be noted that Jung died in 1961.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

It is beyond the purview of this study to enlarge upon these differences, which have been treated at length elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Jung himself contends "the contrast between Freud and myself goes back to essential differences in our basic assumptions."<sup>2</sup> And Patrick Mullahy comments that Jung "appears never to have wholeheartedly accepted his teacher's views in toto."<sup>3</sup> At any rate, Jung eventually began his own school of psychology, taking the name "Analytical Psychology," in contrast with Freud's "Psychoanalysis," and the "Individual Psychology" of Alfred Adler, another of Freud's one-time pupils who separated to set up his own school.<sup>4</sup> Jung explains, "I wish the term to stand for a general conception embracing both 'psychoanalysis' and 'individual psychology,' as well as other efforts in this field."<sup>5</sup>

In working out his theories, Jung advanced some definite differences with Freud's teachings. His very

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<sup>1</sup>For a pro-Freudian account see Edward Glover, Freud or Jung? (New York: Meridian Books, 1957). For a less biased but definitely pro-Jungian version, see Ira Progoff, Jung's Psychology and Its Social Meaning (New York: Grove Press, 1953).

<sup>2</sup>Carl G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1933), p. 124.

<sup>3</sup>Mullahy, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>4</sup>For a summary of Adler's theories, see ibid., pp. 114-128, and Adler's work, Understanding Human Nature, trans. Walter B. Wolfe (New York: Greenberg, 1927).

<sup>5</sup>Jung, Modern Man, p. 28.

significant publication of 1912, The Psychology of the Unconscious, advocates a thorough revision of Freud's concept of the libido.<sup>1</sup> He down-grades Freud's extreme sexual emphasis, claiming it is only one of many instincts, so that the experience of any kind of pleasure is not synonymous with sexuality or sexual pleasure. Jung holds to a much more positive view of the unconscious than does Freud, seeing it with great creative potentialities. He understands that man's mind contains a personal unconscious along with the remnants of his archaic past, as preserved in an impersonal, or "collective," unconscious which has evolved through the long history of mankind.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, man's unconscious contains many symbols which have great significance for his psychic life as they are meaningful transformations of libido energy. Such symbols may be studied as they are manifested in dreams, the consideration of which forms a considerable part of Jungian therapy. The symbols of dreams may in part be understood as indicative of the future, so Jung's emphasis is much more oriented to the here-and-now of present experience than is Freud, who sought to explain illness by finding early traumatic events in the patient's past. Based largely upon symbols and

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<sup>1</sup>Carl G. Jung, The Psychology of the Unconscious, trans. Beatrice M. Hinkle (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1927), p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>This evolution has been described with Jung's approval by one of his followers, Erich Neumann, loc. cit.



their meanings, Jung's Analytical Psychology works toward the goal of individuation, which is to be personally carried on by the patient all through his life and not stopped when appointments with a therapist cease. According to Jung:

Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, in so far as "individuality" embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as "coming to selfhood" or "self-realization."<sup>1</sup>

In the process of individuation, or "coming to selfhood," Jung advocates that the patient avail himself of his own unconscious wisdom. And Jung's understanding of man's psychic composition is more complex than Freud's three-part mental anatomy.<sup>2</sup>

According to his idea there is a male and female side to everyone. If the male is dominant, the female is repressed. The well-rounded individual needs the development of both aspects. Also there are four main characteristics in everyone: thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. These constitute pairs of opposites. The opposite pole to thinking is feeling, and sensation is countered by intuition. In men, thinking and sensation are usually the conscious characteristics and feeling and intuition are repressed. In women feeling and intuition are uppermost. The repressed feminine side of man is called his anima, the repressed masculine side of woman is her animus. The task of therapy is to bring these forces into equilibrium; that is, to develop the anima and animus to make the well-rounded individual. . . . The two main types of character are the extravert and the introvert. Both of these

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<sup>1</sup>Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 158.

types are dominated by one of the four characteristics. Thus there may be a feeling introvert or extravert, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Jung regarded analysis as a mutual process in which analyst and patient jointly participated. "He believed the patient could not progress beyond the point the analyst had reached, but he also believed the analyst could continue to grow through contact with his patients."<sup>2</sup> So Jungian therapy may be seen as a joint pilgrimage into the unconscious, with the analyst serving as a guide in leading the patient along paths which he himself has previously travelled. This aspect is a marked characteristic of Jung's Analytical Psychology, and is "very important since it is the first time analysis was seen as an interpersonal process."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, op. cit., p. 167..    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 166f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 167. This aspect was more fully developed by, among others, Harry Stack Sullivan, who was convinced that the psychiatrist must always act as a "participant observer" in his counseling relationship with his patient. See Sullivan's Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry (Washington, D. C.: The William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, 1947), Forward, pp. v-vi. Sullivan, along with Karen Horney and Erich Fromm, have, in spite of their distinctive presentations, a mutual theory of interpersonal relations regarding the formation and treatment of mental health and illness in general. It is significant to note that Albert C. Outler contends "their common theory of interpersonal relations has more points of contact with Christian notions than any other single perspective in modern psychotherapy. I record in passing my own testimony that the general psychological theory they speak for has been confirmed in my own experience as the most empirically plausible, the most practically useful in the sort of lay counseling a Christian pastor and teacher may do," (Outler, op. cit., p. 156).

Also, this points up the fact of the emphasis Jung laid upon explanation and education in his therapeutic endeavors.

Of great significance for this study are Jung's views concerning confession. It is interesting to note his statement: "The first beginnings of all analytical treatment are to be found in its prototype, the confessional."<sup>1</sup> Jung holds that this connection is not causal, but rather a matter of analysis and the confessional having a "common psychic root," for "as soon as man was capable of conceiving the idea of sin, he had recourse to concealment--or, to put it in analytical language, repressions arose."<sup>2</sup> Of particular relevance for this study is Jung's thought that a "private secret has a destructive effect. It resembles a burden of guilt which cuts off the unfortunate possessor from communion with his fellow beings."<sup>3</sup>

Jung affirms that personal secrets, whether understood as sin or guilt, can be psychically destructive, especially if the concealment involves withheld emotions. He regards self-restraint as a healthful and beneficial social discipline in many cases, yet warns that private self-restraint may result in self-deception in covering up true feelings, with resultant anxiety and loneliness in separation from others. Consequently:

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<sup>1</sup>Jung, Modern Man, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

There appears to be a conscience in mankind which severely punishes the man who does not somehow and at some time, at whatever cost to his pride, cease to defend and assert himself, and instead confess himself fallible and human. Until he can do this, an impenetrable wall shuts him out from the living experience of feeling himself a man among men.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Jung sees conscience as performing a vital function, driving him to level his pride and humbling himself to admitting his fallibility--both are preparatory for further self-knowledge and self-feeling. He sees this experience of unbending as stemming from ancient Greece:

Here we find a key to the great significance of true, unstereotyped confession--a significance known in all the initiation and mystery cults of the ancient world, as is shown by a saying from the Greek mysteries: "Give up what thou hast, and then thou wilt receive." We may well take this saying as a motto for the first stage in psychotherapeutic treatment.<sup>2</sup>

Jung acknowledges that "it is a fact that the beginnings of psychoanalysis were fundamentally nothing else than the scientific rediscovery of an ancient truth" in referring to Freud's "cathartic method" of understanding confession.<sup>3</sup>

The early method of catharsis consisted in putting the patient, with or without hypnotic aid, in touch with the hinterland of his mind--that is to say, into that state which the Eastern yoga systems describe as meditation or contemplation. In contrast to the meditation

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 34f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35. Jung considers confession to be the first of a four-part procedure of therapy, the other three being, in order, explanation, education, and transformation (p. 30).

<sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 154.

found in yoga practice, the psychoanalytic aim is to observe the shadowy presentations--whether in the form of images or of feelings--that are spontaneously evolved in the unconscious psyche and appear without his bidding to the man who looks within. In this way we find once more things that we have repressed or forgotten. Painful though it may be, this is in itself a gain--for what is inferior or even worthless belongs to me as my shadow and gives me substance and mass. How can I be substantial if I fail to cast a shadow? I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole; and inasmuch as I become conscious of my shadow I also remember that I am a human being like any other.<sup>1</sup>

As can be seen, the concept of a "shadow" side of personality is an integral aspect of Jung's thought. As the patient grows in conscious awareness of, and in relationship to, his "shadow," he moves towards wholeness and integration. But this new awareness of the "shadow" must itself be given expression through full confession for genuine reconciliation from estrangement to result. As Jung explains:

When I keep it to myself, this rediscovery of that which makes me whole restores the condition which preceded the neurosis or the splitting off of the complex. In keeping the matter private I have only attained a partial cure--for I still continue in my state of isolation. It is only with the help of confession that I am able to throw myself into the arms of humanity freed at last from the burden of moral exile. The goal of treatment by catharsis is full confession--no merely intellectual acknowledgment of the facts, but their confirmation by the heart and the actual release of the suppressed emotions.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that Jung takes seriously the spiritual dimensions of man's nature. In contrast with Freud's

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<sup>1</sup>Jung, Modern Man, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 35f.

hostile attitude towards religion,<sup>1</sup> Jung's thought

points to the reality of religious experience; considers that the biological side--at least in the usual narrow sense of the term--is less important than the historical and spiritual side of man; holds that a deterministic view of causality seldom applies to mental phenomena, and that a reductive and analytical approach should be replaced by one which synthesizes psychic contents and takes cognizance of the purposive nature of man. Jung deliberately takes an open attitude toward reality, holding that there is more to the universe than the materialist can know, and he relies on the inherent creativity of personality rather than on psychological "mechanisms" for his therapy.<sup>2</sup>

Yet religion for Jung is not a matter of creed or dogma.

In fact, although reared in a Protestant parsonage, it is doubtful whether he could even be described as Christian.<sup>3</sup>

Albert C. Outler plainly states: "Jung's religion is

<sup>1</sup>As evidenced by Freud's The Future of an Illusion, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), in which he holds that religious ideas are born of the need to make tolerable man's helplessness in his cultural environment, and are conceived in man's memories of the helplessness of his own childhood and the childhood of the human race.

<sup>2</sup>Progoff, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Hans Schaer cites a very human incident in which Jung relates his early attitude towards formal religion (and Christian education, incidentally): "I still remember well my confirmation and the preliminary instruction I received at my father's hands. The catechism bored me unspeakably. One day I was turning over the pages of my little book, in the hope of finding something interesting, when my eye fell on the paragraphs about the Trinity. This interested me at once, and I looked forward with impatience for the lessons to get to that section. But when the longed-for day came my father said, 'We'll skip this bit; I can't make head or tail of it myself.' With that my last hopes were dashed," Religion and the Cure of Souls in Jung's Psychology, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Bollingen-Pantheon Books, 1950), p. 194.

Gnosticism--immanentist and mystical."<sup>1</sup> However, perhaps it is more accurate to describe Jung's position as a strong feeling that people need not so much a specific set of doctrines as a religious attitude, "by which he seems to mean a respect for the dignity of human life, and a belief that it has meaning."<sup>2</sup> He held that the nature of religion itself was "essentially symbolic."<sup>3</sup> As such, religious symbols should find expression on all levels of man's psyche. When such symbols are not consciously experienced man is in trouble, especially after middle life.

During the past thirty years, people from all the civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients, the larger number being Protestants, a smaller number Jews, and not more than five or six believing Catholics. Among all my patients in the second half of life--that is to say, over thirty-five--there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook. This of course has nothing whatever to do with a particular creed or membership of a church.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Outler, op. cit., p. 155. In acknowledging Jung's mystical characteristic, Thompson comments: "The chief over-all criticism of Jung's thinking is that it tends to take the patient away from reality and substitute a mystical, semi-religious phantasy life," op. cit., pp. 168f. This writer concurs that such is a definite possibility of Jungian therapy.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>Progoff, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>4</sup>Jung, Modern Man, p. 229.

Accordingly, while Jung has only one writing specifically dealing with religion,<sup>1</sup> his concern with man's spiritual development is deeply imbedded in all his works.<sup>2</sup> He feels that many people are incapable of establishing the kind of relationship with their unconscious which would enable them to live without spiritual danger. Individuals as well as societies are hampered by fears--largely fears of the unconscious forces--which drive them into self-imposed exile and estrangement from others, but especially from themselves. These fears arise when an essential part of the psyche cannot be assimilated to the conscious mind, and when man is confronted with some inner discord that he cannot at the moment overcome. This situation points up the significance of the declining importance of organized religion in contemporary life.

Modern man, Protestant or not, has lost the protection of the ecclesiastical walls carefully erected and reinforced since Roman days, and on account of that loss has approached the zone of world-destroying and world-creating fire. Life has become quickened and intensified. Our world is permeated by waves of restlessness and fear.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938).

<sup>2</sup>This fact is well substantiated by the aforementioned publication of Hans Schaer, op. cit., and also by David Cox in his Jung and St. Paul (New York: Association Press, 1959). Cox makes a specific study as to the relationship between Jung's concept of Individuation and the Protestant doctrine of Justification by Faith, and finds much material for parallel comparison.

<sup>3</sup>Jung, Psychology and Religion, p. 59.



As a general rule, Jung finds that the structure (especially the Confessional) and symbolism of the Catholic Church are more helpful than organized Protestantism:

If the patient is a practicing Catholic, I invariably advise him to confess and to communicate in order to protect himself from immediate experience, which might easily be too much for him. With Protestants it is usually not so easy, because dogma and ritual have become so pale and faint that they have lost their efficacy to a high degree. There is also, as a rule, no confession and the parsons share in the common dislike of psychological problems and also, unfortunately, in the common psychological ignorance.<sup>1</sup>

Here again Jung acknowledges the value of confession, viewing the Roman Confessional as a positive aid to well being. In contrast, Protestantism is in a strange dilemma because of its lack of prescribed protection from immediate experience, yet at the same time it permits of an even larger freedom. As Hans Schaer explains the predicament:

The fact that the symbolism of the Church no longer protects the Protestant from his own unconscious is his peculiar danger, but it is also his great and unique opportunity. The dissolution of symbols exposes him to the risk of losing all spiritual orientation and certainty, but at the same time he may gain the primordial religious experience--if he makes direct contact with the unconscious.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, in concluding Jung's views, he understands Protestantism as inviting a great spiritual adventure. Bereft of prescribed ecclesiastical structure and an ordered way of salvation, Protestant man is, on the one hand, in great danger--yet in a much more penetrating sense

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 53.    <sup>2</sup>Schaer, op. cit., p. 189.

this man has the opportunity for a personal religious experience. He has the possibility of responding creatively to the tensions of his own sensitized conscience in the process of individuation by searching his own motives and crossing the threshold of unconsciousness itself. The result of this situation is that

the Protestant is left to God alone. There is no confession, no absolution, no possibility of any kind of an atoning opus divinum. He has to digest his sins alone and he is not too sure of divine grace, which has become unattainable through lack of a suitable ritual. Owing to this fact the Protestant conscience has become wakeful, and this bad conscience has acquired a disagreeable tendency to linger and to make people uncomfortable. But through this the Protestant has a unique chance to realize sin to a degree hardly attainable by Catholic mentality, for confession and absolution are always ready to relieve too much tension. But the Protestant is left to his tension, which can continue to sharpen his conscience. Conscience, and particularly bad conscience, can be a gift from heaven; a genuine grace, if used as a superior self-criticism.<sup>1</sup>

At this point it must honestly be asked if Jung does not tend to view the Protestant conscience in an unrealistically favorable light. That is, when "left to his tension," it appears to this writer that it would definitely be the exceptional individual who would be able to use his bad conscience in creative "superior self-criticism." More commonly, it is held, the tensions and guilt load of an afflicted conscience would move in the direction of paralyzing the individual's capacity for genuine self-awareness and insight. Yet Jung continues:

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<sup>1</sup>Jung, Psychology and Religion, p. 61.

Self-criticism, as an introspective, discriminating activity, is indispensable to any attempt to understand one's own psychology. If you have done something which puzzles you and you ask yourself what has prompted you to such an action, you need the motive of a bad conscience and its corresponding discriminating faculty in order to discover the real motive of your behavior. It is only then that you are able to see what motives are ruling your deeds.<sup>1</sup>

The above observation serves to point up a final criticism of the entire Jungian program of therapy: namely, that it requires more in the way of superior intellect, ego strength, and rational and reflective capabilities than can generally be assumed of the patient in therapy. Some people undoubtedly do have such abilities, but certainly they are not the rule. Jung also seems aware of the difficulties inherent in his thought, yet encourages the process in virtue of the ultimate goal, as he concludes:

If a Protestant survives the complete loss of his church and still remains a Protestant, that is, a man who is defenseless against God and is no longer shielded by walls or by communities, he has the unique spiritual chance of immediate religious experience.<sup>2</sup>

The final authority to be considered in this section is Carl R. Rogers. In marked contrast to Freud and Jung, Rogers' credentials are non-European, non-medical, and non-nineteenth century. Instead, he was born and educated in America, has taught and practiced as a psychologist (while both Freud and Jung were psychiatrists), and was (and is) very much a part of the modern twentieth

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

century. In fact, it may honestly be wondered whether any other living man has made as great an impact upon contemporary American psychotherapeutic thought--especially within the pastoral counseling movement--as has Carl Rogers.

Born in 1902, Rogers attended college at the University of Wisconsin. While there he decided to enter the ministry and even attended Union Theological Seminary in New York for two years. But he then changed to psychology and transferred to Columbia University for graduate work. In 1928 he took a position as a psychologist at the Child Study Department of the Rochester (New York) Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This proved to be a most fortunate post, since it gave opportunity for Rogers to develop and explore many of his own ideas, which he published, in 1939, in his first major work, The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child.<sup>1</sup>

In 1940 Rogers accepted a position on the faculty of Ohio State University, in Columbus, Ohio. He was at Ohio State for only five years, however. In 1942 Rogers had published his second major volume, Counseling and Psychotherapy, and his reputation was rapidly spreading.<sup>2</sup> In 1945 he moved to the University of Chicago as Professor of

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<sup>1</sup>Carl R. Rogers, The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939).

<sup>2</sup>Carl R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942).

Psychology, and shortly thereafter became Executive Secretary of the University's Counseling Center, as well.

In 1951 Rogers published his next major book, Client-Centered Therapy.<sup>1</sup> He was by now an acknowledged leader in the entire field of individual counseling. In 1957 he resigned his position at Chicago and moved to the University of Wisconsin, in Madison, Wisconsin, as Professor of both Psychology and Psychiatry. His most recent book, On Becoming A Person, came out in 1961, and contains a selection of twenty-one papers and articles produced during the years since 1951.<sup>2</sup> He remains at the University of Wisconsin to date.

In tracing the development of Rogers' thought, it is noteworthy that for the first eight years at Rochester Rogers was completely immersed in carrying on all manner of practical psychological service, a large part of which consisted of "treatment interviews" with delinquent and underprivileged children and their parents. In the process of this daily work he gradually discovered--often to his dismay--that many of the textbook theories were not accurate (e.g., William Healy's teaching that delinquency was often based upon sexual conflict, and that if this conflict was

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<sup>1</sup>Carl R. Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951).

<sup>2</sup>Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming A Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961).

uncovered, the delinquency would cease). This served to raise doubts in his mind about other things he had learned. He began to have grave suspicions about the type of client interviewing then in vogue, which was a clever, legalistic type of questioning by the interviewer, aimed to convict the client of unconscious motives and elicit a confession of guilt. He felt that not only were such methods deceitful and unethical,--but they were also ineffective.

As an alternative, by careful experimentation and examination of his own cases, Rogers came to feel that successful counseling was not so much a matter of technique, or method, as it was a quality of relationship itself. He began to focus his attention not so much upon the words spoken during the counseling interview as upon what actually went on between the counselor and client on a "feeling" level. To get at this more intimate level Rogers came to think that the counselor should be not more aggressive but much less so.

In his first book, Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child, Rogers describes this method of treatment as "relationship," or "passive" therapy.<sup>1</sup> In explaining how it might be used in dealing with the parents of problem children, Rogers stresses that it is "a non-intellectual process which can be but poorly grasped intellectually, but

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<sup>1</sup>Rogers, Clinical Treatment, p. 197.

must be felt or experienced to be grasped." He admits that such "relationship therapy" is difficult to define as a process, but he notes the following characteristics:

1. It applies only to those parents who have a desire to be helped.
2. The relationship between the worker and the parent is the essential feature.
3. The effect of this relationship upon the parent may be characterized by the terms "clarification of feelings," and "acceptance of self."
4. Another characteristic is its reliance on the parent himself to determine, independently, the manner of dealing with the child.<sup>1</sup>

Rogers then goes on to say that while such therapy "has its theoretical basis in the thinking of Otto Rank, it has in large measure become a process rather than a system of thought, and its use is not dependent upon agreement with Rank's formulation of psychology."<sup>2</sup>

Along with Otto Rank and Frederick Allen, Rogers also was influenced by the work of Jessie Taft in Relationship Therapy. She had done considerable work with children, stressing a permissive relationship, use of time limits, and a minimum of intellectualized interpretation. Although Rogers had thoroughly profited from the labors of these earlier workers, it was he himself who really refined and more fully formulated the characteristics of the therapeutic relationship itself.

Yet at the time this first book was published, in 1939, Rogers states that he was personally not yet aware of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 197-199.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

anything particularly distinctive about his work. It was only the year following, in 1940, when he had moved to Ohio State University and was forced to attempt to impart some of these concepts about treatment and counseling to graduate students, that he began to realize that perhaps a distinctive point of view of his own had evolved out of his experience. So he proceeded to put together the manuscript for his second major book, Counseling and Psychotherapy.

In Counseling and Psychotherapy Rogers acknowledges a shift from his early concern for diagnosis to a more specific focusing upon the process of psychotherapy. Accordingly, he lays increasing emphasis upon the dynamics of the counseling relationship itself. And the book's underlying philosophy is increasingly optimistic because of the author's conviction that "counseling may be a knowable, predictable, understandable process, a process which can be learned, tested, refined, and improved."<sup>1</sup>

This second book proceeds entirely from Rogers' "basic hypothesis," which is set forth early as meaning that:

Effective counseling consists of a definitely structured, permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of his new orientation. This hypothesis has a natural corollary, that all the techniques used should aim toward developing this free and permissive relationship, this

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<sup>1</sup>Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. ix.



understanding of self in the counseling and other relationships, and this tendency toward positive, self-initiated action.<sup>1</sup>

It is in the operational application of this "basic hypothesis" that Rogers' contribution has direct relevance for this study. For as he set forth his counseling methodology Rogers presented a clearly delineated series of twelve "Characteristic Steps in the Therapeutic Process."<sup>2</sup> These twelve mingle and shade into one another, but can be summarized as involving five essential phases: (1) Structuring (the helping situation is defined); (2) Release (catharsis, or free expression of negative feelings); (3) Emergence (a reaction to the above, as positive feelings emerge in consequence of the negative); (4) Insight (growth in self-awareness and self-acceptance leading to new action); (5) Closing (feeling of decreasing need for help). It is the above second aspect which is of significance for this investigation.

Rogers does not talk about "confession," as such, in this Release phase, but he is particular to recognize that the unburdening take place. He is not concerned about the nature or specific factual material included in the confession, but, rather, his interest is in the depth and extent of the discharge itself. Consequently, he stresses that the counselor respond not to the intellectual content

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 18.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-45.

of the material being discussed, but to the feelings and emotions--the feeling tone--which is being released, being careful not to hinder its fullest expression. Then, as the negative attitudes of hate, anger, hostility, guilt, etc., are poured out in this releasing process, and fully accepted by a permissive and non-judgmental counselor, the catharsis experienced will be purgative.<sup>1</sup> Rogers is convinced that once this release of negative feelings has taken place, they will be followed by positive feelings, leading towards insight and growth in self-regard and problem solving. The importance of this confession, or Release, phase in Rogers' methodology dare not be underestimated, as the remaining aspects he proposes are all based upon it.

Rooted in this basic hypothesis, the therapeutic relationship itself takes on the major importance, in contrast to earlier views. Rogers describes it as a "newer psychotherapy." He sees its roots in Otto Rank, and as his work was modified by Jessie Taft, Frederick Allen, and others, into Relationship Therapy--yet his newer psychotherapy is now distinct from those older teachings.

Essentially, this newer approach differs from its

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<sup>1</sup>A very interesting parallel can be drawn between Rogers' emphasis upon the need for negative feelings to be released before positive feelings can emerge, and the liturgical emphasis that sin must be confessed before the way is cleared for relationship with God, infra, pp. 200f.

predecessors in that it has a genuinely different goal. It aims directly toward the greater independence and integration of the counselee, instead of only hoping that such benefits will result if the counselor assists in the solving of the problem. Hence, the individual, and not the problem, is the focus. The goal is not to solve any one particular problem, but rather to assist the individual to obtain insight in order to grow, so that he can himself cope with the present problem and with later problems--all in a better-integrated fashion.

The deeper dimensions of Rogerian counseling, however, receive their fullest treatment in Rogers' third book, Client-Centered Therapy. Herein even the word "client" is conscientiously chosen as being basic to Rogerian philosophy, in that:

The client, as the term has acquired its meaning, is one who comes actively and voluntarily to gain help on a problem, but without any notion of surrendering his own responsibility for the situation. It is because the term has these connotations that we have chosen it, since it avoids the connotation that he is sick, or the object of an experiment, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

Further, Rogers plainly states, in considering the development of this book over his earlier works, that "our concern has shifted from the counselor technique to counselor attitude and philosophy, with a new recognition of the importance of technique considered from a more sophisticated

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<sup>1</sup>Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy, p. 7, (n.).

level."<sup>1</sup> With this shift came a different focus upon the Release, or confession, phase of the therapeutic process. The great importance of the client's discharging negative feelings is now seen from a deeper perspective. Rogers' thinking in this regard is that a counselor who tries to employ a certain method, or technique, is doomed to failure unless his procedure is genuinely in line with his own personal attitude and philosophy.

In determining this basic operational philosophy Rogers is concerned with the counselor's attitude towards the worth and significance of the counselee, or "client." So he asks a series of questions:

How do we look upon others? Do we see each person as having worth and dignity in his own right? If we do hold this point at the verbal level, to what extent is it operationally evident at the behavior level? Do we tend to treat individuals as persons of worth, or do we subtly devalue them by our attitude and behavior? . . . Are we willing for the individual to select and choose his own values, or are our actions guided by the conviction (usually unspoken) that he would be happiest if he permitted us to select for him his values and standards and goals?<sup>2</sup>

He finds that those counselors who already possess a sense of the significance and worth of their clients can most readily utilize his client-centered techniques. Such an outlook may be found in child-centered educators, humanistic religious workers, and in some psychologists and psychiatrists--but all too many of the latter group see the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 14.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

person coming to them for help as "an object to be dissected, diagnosed, manipulated," which renders impossible the client-centered technique.

In considering the underlying question of what, in the first place, actually permits the counselor to have such a deep respect and acceptance of the significance and worth of his client, Rogers states:

In our experience, such a philosophy (i.e., respect and acceptance of client) is most likely to be held by the person who has a basic respect for the worth and significance of himself. One cannot, in all likelihood, accept others unless he has first accepted himself.<sup>1</sup>

In summarizing the philosophy of the counselor's attitude which appears to be optimal for client-centered counseling, Rogers holds that it acts from the hypothesis that "the individual has a sufficient capacity to deal constructively with all those aspects of his life which can potentially come into conscious awareness."<sup>2</sup> This statement again underscores the importance of the releasing, or confession, phase, as the discharge of negative feelings is considered basic to eventual conscious awareness of positive feelings. This is not to imply that Rogers hereby minimizes the importance of the counseling relationship, per se. Rather it means that this very relationship is seen in yet a deeper dimension, for it involves the creation of an impersonal situation in which material may come

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 22. (Italics mine.)    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

into the client's awareness, and a meaningful demonstration of the counselor's acceptance of the client as a person who is competent to direct himself. Accordingly, the counselor acts upon the hypothesis in a specific and operational fashion, being ever alert to note those experiences which contradict the hypothesis (and to alter his approach accordingly), as well as those which support it.

In contrast to Freud's pessimism concerning man, Rogers (evidencing more parallel with Jung) has a very high regard for the creative potential of each person. At times his outlook tends towards a mystical doctrine of man. This is so as he comments on his approval of the phrase, "confirming the other," as used by the Jewish existentialist philosopher, Martin Buber:

He says "Confirming means . . . accepting the whole potentiality of the other. . . . I can recognize in him, know in him, the person he has been . . . created to become. . . . I confirm him in myself, and then in him, in relation to this potentiality that . . . can now be developed, can evolve." If I accept the other person as something fixed, already diagnosed and classified, already shaped by his past, then I am doing my part to confirm this limited hypothesis. If I accept him as a process of becoming, then I am doing what I can to confirm or make real his potentialities.<sup>1</sup>

In a paper titled "A Therapist's View of the Good Life," Rogers explains more fully what he means by the "process of becoming," and assisting the client to "make real his potentialities." Herein he sees both

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<sup>1</sup>Rogers, On Becoming A Person, p. 55.

psychotherapy and life itself as a dynamic process (not a state of being), which is in a direction (but which is open-ended, so is not a destination), and which direction is selected by the total organism when there is genuine freedom for it to truly move in any direction. This is the "good life." The characteristics of this process, which are experienced by the person in a positive manner are: (1) an increasing openness to experience; (2) increasingly existential living; (3) an increasing trust in his organism; and (4) the process of functioning more fully.<sup>1</sup>

Involved in this process concept is the implication that the individual will come to experience creativity as a basic element of life, and so will gain a greater sense of trust with lessening defensive needs. The result will be that the individual will gradually awaken to a greater richness in all areas of living, and in life itself--and all of this from more fully realizing one's own potential. He sums up the goal towards which his ideas of counseling move by borrowing a phrase from Soren Kierkegaard: "to be that self which one truly is."<sup>2</sup> Rogers is "quite aware that this may sound so simple as to be absurd," but his formulation explains deeper implications than the phrase itself.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 187-192.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

In summarizing Rogers' thought concerning confession, he considers the Release phase of therapy as a vital aspect in the process of "becoming." He would tend to say that the specific factual content of a client's confession has little meaning apart from its significance in enabling the client to advance in insight, to increase in recognizing his full potential, to be the self he truly is. Yet it is exceedingly important that such free expression of negative feelings take place in order that positive growth might follow. Rogers' contribution is considered a definite corrective to a tendency towards overemphasizing the significance of literal confession. And in the opinion of this writer his influence and emphasis is needed and beneficial. As Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., has commented:

I do not believe that the pastoral counselor should regard the Rogerian approach as the whole gospel of counseling theory and practice. I doubt that his method constitutes a complete therapy for every person who needs pastoral help. But I cannot think of a better route along which to move to a more inclusive methodology than that which moves through Rogers and returns frequently to soak up his salutary and corrective influence.<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary

The significance of confession for psychology is great, being concerned with man's emotional well-being and the relief experienced in unburdening. Basic to

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<sup>1</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Review of On Becoming A Person, by Carl R. Rogers, Pastoral Psychology, XII, No. 119 (December, 1961), 62.



understanding this significance is the concept of guilt, which may be defined as "the accusative sense of failure."<sup>1</sup> This sensation of failure is essentially personal, or individual-centered, in the sense of personally feeling guilty by virtue of self-accusation. It is also interpersonal, or relationship-conscious, in the sense of feeling that others are also accusing, or will accuse, but this latter aspect must also be individually perceived for guilt to result.

Integral to the concept of guilt is man's conscience, which is formed in consequence of the personal internalization of the specific ideas of right ("do's") and wrong ("don't's"), with accompanying moral values, as presented by the significant authority figures of one's formative years. Allport points out that "conscience is the indicator of the measure of agreement between our conduct and our values, whatever they may be."<sup>2</sup> Fromm distinguishes between an "authoritarian conscience" and a "humanistic conscience," claiming that both are needful and necessary for health and productive living.<sup>3</sup> Conscience may also be understood as the Freudian "super-ego." In any case, guilt arises when the content of conscience is violated by human behavior, whether thought, word, or deed--or

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care, p. 110. Also see the previously cited definition, supra, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 139.    <sup>3</sup>Supra, pp. 135-138.

when the conscious "ego" defies the overarching "super-ego" --with conflict as the result. Such guilt may be either conscious or unconscious.

Through its therapeutic endeavors psychology discovered that guilt could be relieved by means of the activity of confession. Freud, following Breuer, early utilized hypnosis to evoke confession, describing it as the "cathartic method." It was thus labeled because of their understanding that the efficacy of such confession "rested on the mental and emotional purging, catharsis, which the patient went through during the treatment."<sup>1</sup> Freud then came to feel that all neurotic conflict stemmed from repression, and so directed his psychoanalysis towards making conscious the unconscious, including guilt, and towards strengthening the ego from the shackles of both the super-ego and the id.

Jung, deviating from Freud, understood man's unconscious in a more positive light than his teacher. Also, his view of man was more complex, so that the goal of his therapy became "individuation," the process of bringing man's consciousness into more awareness and creative relationship with his unconscious. He recognized the impact and power of man's conscience,<sup>2</sup> and saw great value in confession (also "catharsis" and "abreaction"), especially insofar as it enabled man to become aware of repressed

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 154.    <sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 169.

material and his "shadow" side of personality.<sup>1</sup> Jung, in contrast with Freud's hostile feelings toward religion, felt that man's full creative functioning required an appreciative attitude towards his spiritual dimensions.

Carl Rogers serves further to point up the significance of confession by focusing on the emotional force, or feeling tone, which lies behind the material content of the confession. He considers the release phase of therapy to be a vital pre-requisite for the emergence of positive feelings and insight. He is not concerned with the specific factual content of confession apart from the meaning such unburdening holds for the client. Rogers underscores the counselor's own philosophical assumptions, his personal self-acceptance and respect for the basic dignity of his client as essential for the process of "confirming the other,"<sup>2</sup> so that each individual will move towards being able "to be that self which one truly is."<sup>3</sup>

So, in conclusion, it may be stated that the significance of confession for psychology is complex, depending in large measure upon which authority one follows. Guilt is taken seriously by all therapists, but the matter of treatment is not uniform. In the opinion of this writer, both Freud and Jung have made tremendous contributions

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 170.    <sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 188.

towards understanding man's mental mechanisms and dynamics, both on the conscious and unconscious levels, while Rogers has supplied invaluable emphases for helpfully employing the insights of all.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EXPERIENCE OF CONFESSION

#### Situational Factors

"A detailed admission of weakness is the beginning of emotional (or spiritual) strength, in both the ascetic and therapeutic traditions."<sup>1</sup> Such an "admission of weakness" is the essence of confession. Yet such a condition is not easily admitted. From as early as Augustine<sup>2</sup> to as recent as Jung,<sup>3</sup> the chief obstacle to such confession on the conscious level has been recognized as pride. And the overcoming of such pride is basic to the experience of the creature humbling himself before the creator, or the individual's moving from self-deceptive repression (or suppression) to insight and self-realization. In any event, genuine confession is a tension-filled experience.

As will be illustrated in this chapter, the situational setting for confession may be widely varied. As Thurian points out with regard to religious implications:

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Rieff, "The American Transference: From Calvin to Freud," The Atlantic Monthly, CCVIII, No. 1 (July, 1961), p. 107. This issue of this publication carries an excellent "Special Supplement on Psychiatry in American Life."

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 68.    <sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 169.

As to the place of confession, one must be completely free to choose the place that is best suited to the character and temperament of the penitent. Some will prefer to make their confession in the form of a personal conversation with their pastor. He will find it best to receive them in his office or study, provided it is sufficiently separate from the rest of the house, and he can have visitors there without their being too easily observed by the members of his household. If this cannot be arranged, the pastor may make known the times when he may be seen in the vestry of the church. It is important that those who have not made a regular habit of confession, and have no chance of arranging an interview with the pastor, should know the day and time when he is available for confessions. In this way the often delicate matter of broaching the subject will be greatly eased.<sup>1</sup>

The Roman Church announces specific times, commonly Saturday afternoons and evenings, when confessions may be heard. Their designated place is, naturally, the Catholic Confessional Box.<sup>2</sup> However, as Thurneysen declares, offering a Protestant view:

The hour of confession can be at an unexpected time. . . . Also the site of such confession is not prescribed. It does not have to be a confessional, a vestry, or a church room. There is just as little need for candles or a crucifix as for a book with a special liturgy for the confession. All such things are more obstructive than beneficial, because they give the appearance of organized confession. Genuine, ministering confession can take place in any living room, bedroom, or kitchen, on the train, or during a walk, just as well as in the study of the pastor or in a church room.<sup>3</sup>

Most generally, in Protestant practice, confession will take place in the pastor's study, or, as John Sutherland Bonnell suggests, in the "Consulting Room":

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<sup>1</sup>Thurian, op. cit., pp. 119f.      <sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Thurneysen, op. cit., p. 74.

The ideal location is a room in the church or the church house, readily accessible from the street. In smaller congregations, the interviews of necessity may be held in the pastor's home. Where this is the practice, the minister's study will serve or else a small room conveniently located. . . . If interviews are held at a church or church house a small and not overfurnished room is best. A desk, a little table, and one or two chairs will suffice. If the minister is permitted to arrange the physical details of the room he should insure that there are two exits. The parishioner, on leaving the consulting room, need not then come into contact with anyone waiting outside. This is especially helpful if the consultant has become emotionally upset. In any case, it is embarrassing if the consultant has to come face to face with someone he knows. In larger churches he will usually be ushered into the room by a secretary.

An ideal arrangement is for the minister to be able to enter the consulting room from his study without passing through the waiting room. Seldom will more than two chairs be required. A third may be kept available in case a husband and wife come together for an interview, after they have met the pastor separately.<sup>1</sup>

Such conscientious and sensitive preparations as Bonnell suggests, designed to ease the confessant's anxiety and alleviate his personal self-consciousness even before any particular communication has transpired, will be very beneficial. Of course, behind all such arrangements to facilitate confession is the whole sphere of contacts between the pastor and his people which Seward Hiltner has called "Precounseling Work."<sup>2</sup> Such pastoral work takes place in the Catholic Church as well, but due to the

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<sup>1</sup>John Sutherland Bonnell, Psychology for Pastor and People (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), pp. 84f.

<sup>2</sup>Seward Hiltner, Pastoral Counseling (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), pp. 125-148.

relatively impersonal nature of the blank confessional box screen, the Roman approach is considered to be less effective. That is, one of the reasons for the superficial quality of Catholic confessions stems from the fact that they are not particularly built upon the pastor-parishioner relationship, but involve only man and the impersonal Church. At the same time, however, it must be recognized that such authority-centered confession, directed towards obtaining acceptance from the authority figure of the Roman Church, may be even more helpful to people living under its framework than would be the person-centered confession of psychotherapy, which aims at increased self-acceptance. In such circumstances, authority-centered confession might actually be a pre-requisite for personal self-acceptance.

Theological confession is certainly not limited to the physical church building, however. In fact, the symbolism of the church itself, with its judgmental and authoritarian overtones, may be precisely what hinders such depth level expression. The Bible Camp situation, or religious outing, may be more conducive with certain individuals, especially teen-agers.<sup>1</sup> Also, certain crisis atmospheres, such as the war-time battle line, the prison and the hospital, may engender the confessional experience.

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, see Tom J. Lasswell, "A Conversation with a High School Girl," Pastoral Psychology, XI, No. 109 (December, 1960), 41-45.



Even the minister's home may become the locale, as indicated by the episode related by Leslie Weatherhead:

Dr. Boreham, the famous Australian writer, tells how he was once sitting by the fire reading to the members of his family when they were interrupted by the ringing of the front door bell. "You are wanted. It's a young woman; she says she won't come in. I think she's crying." Boreham went to the door. His visitor was standing a few steps along the veranda out of the light of the lamp. At first she refused to come in, though it was a bleak and bitter night, and black as ink. Ultimately, after asking him to make sure the blinds had been drawn down, she slipped in furtively, like a hunted animal, threw herself into the study armchair, buried her face in her hands, and burst into a tempest of tears. When she could trust herself to speak, she poured out a story which, says Boreham, "has been written sometimes very sternly, sometimes very tenderly, thousands of times since our little race began." Before she went Boreham asked her, "Why did you come to me? Have we met before?" "No," she said, "but I just had to speak at last. I felt that I had kept it to myself long enough, and that unless I told it all to somebody I should lose my reason or die."<sup>1</sup>

The significant point to be gathered from the above discussion is that confession within a religious framework may take place anywhere, especially in the Protestant tradition. All that need be present is a minister, a man of God, symbolizing God himself for the confessant, along with the atmosphere and relationship which he fosters. The motivation for the confession stems from the confessant's own sense of urgency and the meaning of the relationship he perceives.

Within the psychotherapeutic framework, it is

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<sup>1</sup>Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology in Service of the Soul (London: The Epworth Press, Wyvern Books, 1958), p. 51.

recognized that the only setting for confession is generally the therapist's office or counseling chamber. Here the patient reclines on a couch, if within a Freudian orientation, or sits face-to-face across from the therapist, if in Jungian or Rogerian contexts. Further, the time for confession is not as wide open as for pastoral counseling, but is confined to the fifty-minute therapeutic hour. The framework of such confession is also more restricted: instead of the confessant-confessor-God triangle, it becomes primarily the therapist-patient relationship. This relationship, however, is commonly all the more intense precisely because it is more confined, especially as stimulated by the dynamics of transference.<sup>1</sup>

Although most confessions are verbal, another form in which they are sometimes presented is by written letter. McNeill has pointed out that the Catholic church does not permit such second-hand expressions, whether by letter or messenger.<sup>2</sup> But within the more person-conscious Protestant traditions, as emphasized by the concept of the priesthood of all believers, such letters as the following received by Weatherhead are not unusual:

"Dear Sir,--Please excuse my writing to you, but I am in such trouble and distress and no one to speak to. Today I am almost frantic with terror. I was reading

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<sup>1</sup>See Karl Menninger, Theory of Psychoanalytic Technique, pp. 77ff.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 85.

an article about you in the \_\_\_\_\_ called 'A Doctor of Souls,' and I have plucked up the courage to write to you. Twenty years and more ago I . . . There is also another sin in connexion with the first. I have regretted my sins deeply for many years, but during the past six months the horror and shame of the whole thing has come home to me with such force that I am a complete nervous wreck. My son and daughter, the best in the world, do everything for me, but they cannot cure an evil conscience. The thought of it all makes me shudder. Can there be any hope for me? I am getting old (57), and the thought of death and meeting God, the thought of how I have betrayed my trust in my children is driving me frantic. Please forgive me writing you, but if it is possible could you write to the enclosed address?"<sup>1</sup>

Such correspondence as the above would hopefully be followed up by the answer which the author invites, and, if time and distance allow, a personal meeting would be arranged. Psychotherapists also respond to such letters. In fact, some therapists encourage their patients to write to them on the days between appointments or when on trips. Some patients even find it more comfortable to express themselves by writing letters of confession before their analytic sessions and then reading the letters personally before the therapist, rather than having to spontaneously give free expression to their unburdening. Naturally, such behavior is also further "grist for the therapeutic mill."

Another form which confession may take is liturgical, or ritualistic, confession. In contrast to the Catholic ritualistic sacrament of Penance, involving penitent

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<sup>1</sup>Weatherhead, Psychology in Service of the Soul, p. 52.

and priest in the Confessional Box, the writer here refers to the general confession which takes place within the worship service of many Protestant denominations. Such expression is commonly labelled as "the Confession of Sins," and is designed to fall early in the service in order to clear the way of the sin which separates the congregation and God. A form of "Confession of Sins" (including Absolution) is found in the standard Order of Service of the writer's own Lutheran Church.<sup>1</sup> While the doctrinal theory behind such confession is certainly valid, bearing in mind that sin is understood as that which separates, so that its confession restores man with God in vital relationship, informal questioning of worshippers indicates that such general confession is largely unappreciated. While it is undoubtedly true that some people who would never become subjects for private confession probably obtain some relief through this observance, its overall effect is minimal. The significance and implications of liturgical confession are generally not recognized by the worshipping congregation for the reason that sin is not popularly understood as comprising that which comes between man and God. Correspondingly, the liturgical Absolution, which follows the confession, is also quite unappropriated. But even more

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<sup>1</sup>Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1958), pp. 1f.

fundamental for the purpose of this study is the writer's contention that such liturgical confession is ineffectual because it is too general; that is, it is not personal enough so that the individual feels that it is he, as a separate and distinct personality, who is laying his own particular sins before God, seeking forgiveness. The alternatives to this dilemma appear to be: (1) recognize that such general confession is largely ineffective and take steps to make it more personally relevant; (2) by means of more thorough religious education, instruction and preaching, specifically point up the dynamic meaning of sin and forgiveness so as to enhance the consequent understanding of liturgical confession and absolution; (3) abolish such confession altogether. The writer holds that liturgical confession is an essential of vital worship experience and recommends that the second of these options be adopted.

### The Experience of Confession

Confession is a requisite of vital spiritual, mental, and physical health. Only through confession of sin can a person be restored and accepted in relationship to God. Similarly, only through such open acknowledgment and repudiation of guilt can a person reaffirm his own feeling of adequateness and self-acceptance. The burden of unconfessed material is significantly included in the psychic

pressures which occasion personality disintegration. Consequently, as Paul Johnson points out, confession is both needed and difficult: "It is needed because the respres-sions of anxiety and guilt increase the tensions that disturb personality. It is difficult because isolation, timidity, shame, dignity, and fear of being misunderstood block the way to expression."<sup>1</sup> All of these factors are present in the experience of confession.

The following verbatim account movingly depicts such an experience.<sup>2</sup> The dialogue takes place between Carl, a seventeen-year-old boy, hospitalized by a kidney ailment, and the hospital chaplain, a Protestant minister. They had originally met the day before when the Chaplain had made a visit to Carl's room, and now the boy had requested that the Chaplain return for a further talk.

Chaplain 1: How are things going today?

Carl 1: Not very well. (Grimaces with pain.) I told the nurse not to give me a shot until you came. I wanted to talk to you while my head was still clear.

Ch.2: I am sorry you are having this much trouble with the pain.

C.2: It doesn't matter too much. (Again facial expression and bodily movement indicated that the patient was undergoing a great deal of pain.) Most of all I needed to talk to you. I could

<sup>1</sup>Johnson, Psychology of Religion, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup>This verbatim account is taken from an unsigned article, "Counselor at Work," in Christian Advocate, VI, No. 2 (January 18, 1962), pp. 14f. The numbering of responses was made by this writer. See also Newman S. Cryer, Jr., and John M. Vayhinger, Casebook in Pastoral Counseling (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962).

tell yesterday that you were someone I could talk to. My own pastor . . . well, I could never talk to him.

- Ch.3: You just don't feel a closeness to your own pastor.
- C.3: Not like with Dr. Smith. I used to call him Bill. All of us did. Dr. Jones is all right, he's a good man. I know he is, but somehow I just don't feel like I could talk to him.
- Ch.4: It is just not the same feeling that you once had, the same closeness.
- C.4: No, nothing is the same anymore. I used to be at church every Sunday, Sunday night, too. But now I just don't go anymore. Oh, once in a while on Sunday morning, but I just don't feel right there anymore.
- Ch.5: You don't really feel that you belong there.
- C.5: Well, my name is on the roll, but I guess I feel like I don't deserve to be there. I have slipped so far and done so many things I shouldn't.
- Ch.6: Because you are not what you should be, you feel a separation between you and the church.
- C.6: Yes, I do, It didn't used to be that way. I was there most all the time, really enjoyed being there. I think I really was a Christian. Well, as much as you can be at the age I was then. But everything felt right. Now not much of anything feels right.
- Ch.7: Things are just kind of out of joint. It is almost like saying that you don't feel like yourself anymore.
- C.7: That's it. I can't believe that what I have been, the things I have done, are really myself.
- Ch.8: You look at the things you have done and you think of yourself as you should be or the way you want yourself to be, and there is a tremendous difference.
- C.8: There sure is, and I don't know what I can do about it. I don't see how I can ever be like I was. I mean I don't want to be a kid anymore, but somehow things felt right and I felt good in church. Now I don't feel like that anymore.
- Ch.9: You don't want to go back, but some way or other things have got to feel right again.
- C.9: I have done some awful things. I have done a whole lot of drinking. I don't mean I am an alcoholic or anything. But, you know, going out with the boys. We drink a lot. It is not something I can't control, but I don't really want to. I didn't used to be that way.

- Ch.10: Things didn't used to get out of hand like they do now.
- C.10: That's right. But I guess the main trouble has been my girl. I wouldn't mind the other so much if I could not have done this with her. You know what I mean, and she was a nice girl, too.
- Ch.11: You mean there's a particular girl that you had intercourse with, and you wish terribly that this were something you could undo.
- C.11: Yes. . . . It was the only time I have, and the worst of all it was the first time for her. I feel like I have ruined her for life.
- Ch.12: Most of it is the guilt that you feel for having hurt the girl.
- C.12: That's right. I can hardly face her again. This was Sunday before last, and I don't really know what to do. I think she will date me again, but I don't know what it would be like being with her again.
- Ch.13: Things have changed between you because of what you did.
- C.13: Yes. It was just one of those things I couldn't help wanting to see what it would feel like. We were parked and I got her to the point where I could do what I wanted to. I think by that time she wanted to, too. So we went on and did it. I felt so awful. I don't know how she feels.
- Ch.14: You mean that in one way it was something you could hardly help, but on the other hand you feel the guilt of being responsible.
- C.14: Yes. I know I have done something that I can't change. She was a nice girl and I keep thinking that now maybe, because she has done it once, she will go on and do it with other people and ruin herself.
- Ch.15: In some way, all that might happen to her from now on is partly your responsibility.
- C.15: That's the way I feel, because this is something that can't be undone. I feel like going to her and pleading and begging for her not to do it anymore. I think I can stop, but it's not the same with me as it is with her.
- Ch.16: If there were just something you could do. You have this feeling of wanting something so badly, to change things, to keep some of the things from happening that might happen.
- C.16: But what can I do or say? I knew I couldn't ask my dad. All he would do is worry about



- whether or not she is pregnant. And I don't think she is. I took precautions.
- Ch.17: It's not the fear of pregnancy that makes you feel this way. It's not the fear of something that might happen, but the guilt of something that has happened.
- C.17: That's right. I am not afraid, I just hurt inside. How can I make it up to her?
- Ch.18: I have this feeling with you of wishing there were some kind of magic that would make things different than they are, but I guess we both know there isn't. There's not really anything we ourselves can do to take away our guilt.
- C.18: But how I wish there was. I want to do something. I need to do something.
- Ch.19: If only you could do something. If only I or somebody else could tell you what it was that would make things right.
- C.19: That's right. That's why I needed to talk to you. I want to be myself again. I want to be able to go to church. I am going to try to be different, to make things different. But I don't know how.

Carl's initial responses (C.1 and C.2) indicate his feelings of anxiety and urgency. He seeks the Chaplain's good will and acceptance, by being brave (the pain "doesn't matter too much") and in moving towards the Chaplain ("Most of all I need to talk to you. I could tell yesterday that you were someone I could talk to"). Firmest approval is sought in C.2 and C.3 by even placing the Chaplain ahead of his own pastor,--but not wanting to seem completely disloyal, he speaks fondly of a former minister.

With the groundwork laid, Carl proceeds to indicate symptoms of the problem. In C.4 he reveals his feelings of loneliness from church ("I just don't go anymore") and subsequent estrangement ("I just don't feel right there anymore"). His feeling of lack of self worth in relation to

God ("I don't deserve to be there") come out in C.5. Also, here in Carl's admission, "I have slipped so far," is a vivid contemporary word picture of the biblical description of sin as meaning to "miss the mark," or "deviate from the right way."<sup>1</sup> Carl's feeling is rightly picked up by the Chaplain in Ch.6, in reflecting the sensation of "separation between you and the church." Again, it is recognized in this study that sin comprises that which separates man from God.<sup>2</sup> Carl goes on to illustrate in C.6 implications of this separation in the resultant disintegration of his personality ("It didn't used to be that way. . . . I think I really was a Christian. . . . Everything felt right. Now not much of anything feels right."). C.7 indicates Carl's despair and loss of self-respect as his self-image is shattered ("I can't believe that what I have been, the things I have done, are really myself"). He feels helpless to save himself by his own power, in C.8 ("I don't know what I can do about it"), and is aware of a fallen condition ("I don't see how I can ever be like I was").

In the interview thus far the Chaplain has been careful to be non-condemning and non-judgmental, with the result that Carl has felt encouraged to give "free expression of feelings in regard to the problem," in Rogers' words.<sup>3</sup> Carl has responded to this accepting relationship,

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 46f.    <sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 71f.

<sup>3</sup>Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 35.

and in C.9 he begins to move towards a more specific confession of that which is causing his anguish ("I have done some awful things. I have done a whole lot of drinking. . . . I didn't used to be that way"). This statement of Carl's is largely a test confession. That is, it was consciously or unconsciously designed to put the Chaplain's attitude to the test. If the Chaplain had responded by falling into the trap of giving Carl a lecture on the evils of a seventeen-year-old succumbing to the temptations of alcohol, the whole course of the interview would have shifted. Fortunately, in Ch.10 the Chaplain was not side-tracked, but stayed with Carl's feeling tone. The accepting atmosphere was maintained, and Carl felt the courage to go on.

With the test confession safely passed, Carl quickly moves into the real confession in C.10 ("I guess the main trouble has been my girl. I wouldn't mind the other so much if I could not have done this with her. You know what I mean, and she was a nice girl, too."). It has been difficult for Carl to get at this "main trouble"--so much so that he can't actually bring himself to put it into words. But evidently having felt that the Chaplain was closely feeling with him all during their exchange, Carl only states, "You know what I mean." In Ch.11 the Chaplain responds to this assumption, albeit making something of a guess, and rightly clarifies Carl's suggestion by

specifically holding up intercourse as the cause of Carl's fears. Carl then admits the truth of the matter.

In C.11 and C.12 Carl goes more deeply into his feelings of guilt ("It was the only time I have, and worst of all it was the first time for her. . . . I can hardly face her again"). Here Carl's awareness of his actions result in his being painfully sensitive of a quality of separation in his relationship with his girl. This eye-opening realization is directly parallel to the awareness of estrangement experienced by Adam and Eve in their relationship with God after their transgression.<sup>1</sup> Carl now sees his girl in an entirely different light. Before their intimacy "she was a nice girl" (C.10), but now "I don't know what it would be like being with her again" (C.12).

On an even deeper level Carl feels the personal guilt of his responsibility for the girl's condition. "I feel like I have ruined her for life" (C.11); "I keep thinking that now maybe, because she has done it once, she will go on and do it with other people and ruin herself" (C.14). He acknowledges personal responsibility for the girl's loss of virginity and is pained to think of what future implications might result. "I feel like going to her and pleading and begging for her not to do it anymore. I think I can stop, but it's not the same with me as it is

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 8-11.

with her" (C.15). His fear of liability is in part borne out of genuine concern for the girl, but also involved is his anxiety over community disapproval and rejection of him as a person, should the transgression become publicly known. It should be recognized that Carl's guilt has generally been voiced as manifested in his relationship with his girl, rather than as concerns his relationships with family, friends, and God. Yet it can correctly be assumed that these other relationships are very much in his mind, especially in that it was specifically the authority figure of the Chaplain that he invited to discuss the matter.

Yet in spite of Carl's unburdening in his confession he feels a genuine helplessness to rectify the situation. He admits his guilt and knows that his deed cannot be revoked as he states, "This is something that can't be undone" (C.15). Consequently, he feels at a loss, in C.16 ("What can I do or say?"). He feels "hurt inside" (C.17) and wants to make amends, in C.18 ("I want to do something. I need to do something"). And it is precisely this feeling, evidenced in C.19, of being out of relationship with himself ("I want to be myself again") and his God ("I want to be able to go to church"), together with the earnest longing for restoration and reconciliation ("I am going to try to be different, to make things different"), which leads him to make his confession to the Chaplain ("That's

why I needed to talk to you").

The above confession clearly contains psychological dimensions; yet it is essentially religious in nature. That is, while it takes form in the two-way conversation between the Chaplain and hospital patient, God is always acknowledged, symbolized by the church, to form a three-part triangle. Further, it is noted that Carl specifically called for the Chaplain and openly willed to make his confession. The depth of feelings expressed by Carl indicates that the interview was undoubtedly helpful for him, although the Chaplain did little more than listen and reflect in the approved Rogerian manner. The Chaplain did not deny Carl's feelings of guilt, or attempt to reassure him, with the result that Carl felt the freedom to give open expression to what was on his mind. Yet it is noted that there was no uniquely religious aspect in the cited extract of the Chaplain's work, and the remainder of the interview will be treated in the following chapter.<sup>1</sup>

Such voluntary confession is not always the case. More often than not the actual facts and details involved in confession are of such a nature as to be especially threatening to unhindered expression. This is definitely true of hidden material appropriate to psychotherapeutic consideration. As has been pointed out, Freud initially

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<sup>1</sup>Infra, pp. 258-263.

utilized hypnosis as his "cathartic method" to evoke confession.<sup>1</sup> Hypnosis is still used, in some cases, especially when there appears to be some mysterious blockage to therapeutic progress. The following example is a therapist's account of his work with a forty-year-old man serving time in a prison for forgery and fraud. The prisoner had willingly sought therapy to discover the reasons for his criminal behavior, but, after early progress, treatment had reached a plateau, so that the therapist was told by his supervisor to conclude sessions with this man after ten further meetings.

Near the end of the ten sessions, he began to exhibit signs of distress, claiming that although he had benefited he felt absolutely certain that there was something else that had to come out. He was certain that there was an explanation for his bizarre criminal behavior and that he felt certain he would someday come out with the answer. However, despite his distress and insistence that there was something that "wanted to come out" he never seemed to be able to produce the material he desired.

On the next to last session, without previous warning, I asked him if he wanted me to hypnotize him since through this method it was possible that this "deep dark" secret might come out. He agreed and I hypnotized him. He went into a deep trance quickly, and I asked him to tell me what it was that was distressing him. With tears running down his face he recounted an incident which he had never referred to before: He had been the cause of the death of a childhood friend. His part in the incident, which had occurred 30 years previously, had never been recounted to anyone. I told him that when he came out of the hypnosis he would have no memory of what he had said, but that he would recall what he had said by our next session. He came out with amnesia and was surprised to find he had been crying.

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 154.

In the next session he produced an explanation for his previously unexplained criminal behavior relating it to his need for punishment for his "murder" of 30 years before, stating that all of his crimes had occurred immediately after someone else in his environment had died. He believed that he wanted to be punished for his earlier crime. Having said this he began to exculpate himself for his part in the death of his friend, and said that he felt greatly relieved.<sup>1</sup>

The above confessional material was clearly unconscious, which was the reason for employing hypnosis. But even conscious material may be defensively withheld from confession when deemed particularly frightening. The guilt may be so strong that an individual simply does not have the courage to voluntarily bring it out into the open. In such cases a therapist, in marked deviation from Freud's injunction against intervention, may forceably apply probing pressure directed towards eliciting a confession. The following example illustrates such a procedure:

After two months of therapy, during which period the patient unceasingly complained of severe emotional distress, which seemed almost apparent in her appearance, and after a good relationship with the therapist was firmly established, the therapist asked point-blank whether or not there was something in her life she had concealed, which might disturb her. The reason for this request was the following: the patient gave the impression of being a perfectionist and was extremely concerned with propriety and goodness, and never revealed anything derogatory about herself. The therapist believed that the patient was consciously withholding something--probably a sexual affair--which might have

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley W. Standal and Raymond J. Corsini (eds.), Critical Incidents in Psychotherapy (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 147. For a further example of hypnosis as utilized in the treatment of a criminal psychopath, see Robert M. Lindner, Rebel Without a Cause (New York: Grove Press, 1944).



related to her homicidal impulses. The patient denied, with great affectation of sincerity, anything whatsoever of any importance. The therapist did not accept this statement and insisted to the patient that there must be something she was withholding which she just had to reveal. The therapist made it very clear that "This is your opportunity to get well; now is your chance."

Finally, reluctantly, the patient admitted that there was something in her life, so shameful that she could not possibly discuss it. For three interviews the content was whether or not the patient would confess her sin. Finally, she told the following: at the age of six she had been induced by another little girl to permit a dog to perform cunnilingus on her. On and off throughout her life she had practiced this perverted behavior, even after marriage, although she did deny recent practice.

Immediately after these disclosures the patient obtained evident relief from her depression. Besides, she showed a change of attitude from a somewhat skeptical pose to one of reasonableness and was able to accept the fact that her feelings of guilt for her perverted practices had generated these obsessions toward her daughter. It was explained that others also have committed sinful actions but are nevertheless able to accept themselves. The obsessive homicidal feelings subsided slowly. Therapy is still going on, but on a more satisfactory basis.<sup>1</sup>

The "shock treatment" technique in the above incident was exceedingly dangerous, amounting to an invasion of the patient's personality. Had the therapist been able to win her confidence and induce her to open up more freely, he would have been in a much better position. However, for the purpose of this study the incident illustrates that the experience of unburdening previously hidden material definitely was cathartic and purgative, permitting the organism to realize its own basic drive towards wholeness.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 300.

### Interaction in Confession

There are all possible degrees of interaction present in the experience of confession. On the part of the Confessor (the individual hearing the confession), they range from the almost completely one-sided blank screen of the Roman Catholic Confessional Box, through the detached and aloof lack of eye-meeting of classical Freudian theory, through the "grunt therapy" of extreme Rogerianism, through the more responsive face-to-face social therapists and pastoral counselors, to the "participant-observer" relationship advocated by Harry Stack Sullivan. On the part of the Confessant (the individual bearing the confession), the degrees of interaction range from the defiant and hostile criminal fighting cooperation with the law,<sup>1</sup> through the extremely repressed patient who is the subject for depth therapeutic treatment, through the individual feeling severe anxiety over suppressed material, through the person consciously aware of his guilt yet realizing difficulty in bringing it out, to the overly scrupulous compulsive confessant who never ends of tell all--yet who rarely gets to

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<sup>1</sup>This study has not at all been concerned with the form of legal, or criminal, confession which may utilize extremely coercive "third degree" types of grilling towards forcing an admission, although it is recognized that such exists. Yet such confession is considered to be of a wholly different classification than that under investigation. Nor is this study directly concerned with the confessions involved in the treatment of extreme psychotics, although such are definitely significant.

the actual difficulty without professional assistance.

Directly relevant to the entire interaction in the experience of confession are the respective personalities of the Confessor and Confessant. Particularly significant are their perceptions of themselves and each other. Both pastor and therapist are subject to what Michael Ballint, writing from a medical point of view, has called the "Apostolic Function":

Apostolic mission or function means in the first place that every doctor has a vague, but almost unshakably firm, idea of how a patient ought to behave when ill. Although this idea is anything but explicit and concrete, it is immensely powerful, and influences, as we have found, practically every detail of the doctor's work with his patients. It was almost as if every doctor had revealed knowledge of what was right and what was wrong for patients to expect and to endure, and further, as if he had a sacred duty to convert to his faith all the ignorant and unbelieving among his patients. It was this which suggested the name of "apostolic function."<sup>1</sup>

This apostolic emphasis may very well develop into a "Messiah" complex in insecure counselors, with tremendous dependency relationships resulting. A certain degree of this quality is expected, and even necessary, but it can become definitely detrimental if not properly worked through and resolved in the course of counseling.

These perceptions of the participants involved will mightily influence the character of the confession itself.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Ballint, The Doctor, His Patient and the Illness (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1957), p. 216.

For instance, if either party perceives weaknesses or blind spots in the other, he may exploit them for his own advantage and at the expense of a beneficial confession. If either attempts to manipulate or coerce the other, it may negate their entire relationship. An example of such coercion is illustrated by Seward Hiltner in the fascinating verbatim "sketches" of Ichabod S. Spencer, a Protestant minister in Brooklyn, New York, during the mid-nineteenth century. Spencer was generally a sensitive and conscientious pastor, but felt his function as a man of God was to convict of sin by searching personal conversations with his parishioners. In the cited case Spencer's coercion took the form of pressure and probing questions in counseling with a Mrs. N. Fortunately, for all concerned, his efforts did not destroy his long-range effectiveness but certainly complicated the entire situation.

When I first became acquainted with her, I noticed this tender melancholy which hung around her like the shadow of a cloud; and I supposed that the twilight of some affliction still lingered around her heart, or that some secret grief was buried deep in her own bosom. After a more intimate acquaintance with her, I came to the conclusion that she had some trial of which she never spoke, but which preyed in secret upon her heart. I thought her appearance indicative of a concealed grief which, like a worm in the bud, was preying upon her life.<sup>1</sup>

Spencer here makes the judgment which is to cause his later difficulties. After sensing in Mrs. N. a "trial of which

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<sup>1</sup>Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology, p. 102.

she never spoke," he determined to do what he could to evoke a confession in order to bring her into relationship with God.

I aimed to mention the subject of religion to her, in the most delicate and affectionate manner possible. I called upon her for that purpose. I found her alone. After a few moments of conversation I said to her,--  
 Spencer: I have several times mentioned the subject of religion to you, Mrs. N., but you have been quite reserved; and I have called upon you today to converse with you upon that subject, if you will allow me such a favor.

Mrs. N.: I am glad to see you, sir.

Spencer: Allow me to ask you whether you are a member of the church?

Mrs. N.: No, sir, I am not.

Spencer: And do you think you are still living in unbelief, after all your opportunities?

Mrs. N.: I suppose, sir, I have no reason to think I am a Christian (with a look of mingled solemnity and sorrow).

Spencer: Is it wise for you to neglect your salvation?

Mrs. N.: I know it is not wise, sir. My own heart condemns me (with much emotion).

Spencer: Then, madam, do not neglect it any longer. The favor of God is within your reach. He calls to you in His gracious kindness, and invites you to turn to Him for pardon and peace, freely offered to you through the great Redeemer of sinners. But how comes it about, Mrs. N., that you have neglected salvation so long?

Mrs. N.: I do not know, indeed, sir. I suppose I have been too worldly, and too much led away by my own heart, though I have thought about religion a great deal all my life.

Spencer: I suppose so too. And I know you ought, instantly, to "deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow Jesus Christ," and not suffer your heart to be led away any longer.

She was much affected. I asked her some questions which she did not answer, because (as I then supposed), of a conflict in her own mind, betwixt a sense of duty and the love of the world. I therefore urged her as solemnly and affectionately as I could, to give her attention to religion without delay, and left her.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

It is evident from the above that Spencer gets quickly to the point. His authority-laden questions and admonitions would have demolished many counseling relationships, but evidently there was a masochistic inclination in Mrs. N. which resulted in her almost thriving on their interaction. Spencer's next meeting with her brought more questions and more pressure:

Spencer: Have you been giving your attention to religion since I saw you?

Mrs. N.: I have thought of it very often, sir.

Spencer: And have you prayed about it very often?

Mrs. N.: I have tried to pray (sadly), but I do not know as it was true prayer.

Spencer: Do you feel your need of God's blessing, as an undone sinner, condemned by the law of God, and having a wicked heart?

Mrs. N.: Sometimes I think I feel it; but I suppose I do not feel it as much as I ought to.

Spencer: Do you feel that you need Christ to save you?

Mrs. N.: I know it, sir; but I am afraid I do not feel it. My heart seems hard, very hard; I wonder at myself, my stupid self.<sup>1</sup>

This discussion must have been very frustrating for Spencer. He continues to press for a confession which appears to be all the more elusive. His counselee seems not to be denying anything on an intellectual level--yet Mrs. N.'s feelings seem blocked.

In the subsequent period Spencer had several interviews with Mrs. N., "in all of which she was solemn and much affected, but ordinarily her words were few." Several months passed, and Spencer went over the plan of salvation, recommended texts of Scripture, and otherwise sought to touch or instruct her. But "still she found no peace of mind, no hope." Spencer says he had expected at first that she would "come out of her

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 103f.

darkness into the light of faith"; but when months passed and she failed to do so, then he feared that she would become "less solemn or less studious or less tender in feeling." But that did not happen either. At every pastoral call Mrs. N. would "be melted into tears in spite of all her efforts," but would express gratitude to Spencer.<sup>1</sup>

These developments point up Mrs. N.'s need to be punished. Although her "words were few" and she cried freely under Spencer's barrage, she continued to thank him for his attention to her. Their interaction was verbally quite one-sided, so that one gets the impression that Spencer would have been relieved if she had banished him altogether. But she did not, although remaining "uncomforted." In subsequent visits Spencer went down a long list of questions, aiming at conviction, but as before, on each one Mrs. N. was without reproach:

Spencer: Do you think you can make your heart any better?

Mrs. N.: I am sure I can do nothing for myself. . . .

Spencer: Do you seek the Lord with all your heart?

Mrs. N.: I suppose not, sir; for if I did I should not remain in this miserable condition.

Spencer: Do you rely upon any righteousness of your own to save you, or commend you to Christ?

Mrs. N.: I have no righteousness. I know very well there is nothing in me but sin and misery. . . .

Spencer: Don't you love the world too well?

Mrs. N.: The love of the world tempts me, I am afraid, sometimes; but I feel that I am willing to forsake all for Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Finally Spencer runs out of leading questions, and bluntly gets to the heart of the matter:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 104.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

Spencer: Let me ask you, my dear friend, with all respect and affection, don't you indulge in some sin (sin of enmity, or envy, or discontent, or something else), some sin that keeps you from peace of conscience and peace with God?

Mrs. N.: No sir, I am not conscious of any such sin. I know I sin all the time. I struggle against it, but I do not indulge myself in any sin that I know of.<sup>1</sup>

This was certainly the right answer, but still Mrs. N.'s "peace" did not come. Spencer was evidently so nonplused that he relented of his direct efforts to break her. Several years then passed in which their relationship was maintained, but then Spencer began anew. A later call was the turning point in their interaction:

Spencer: Is it not strange that you do not love such a God?

Mrs. N.: (Greatly to Spencer's surprise) I think I do love God, sir.

Spencer: How long do you think you have loved Him?

Mrs. N.: Ever since I was a little child. I cannot remember the time when I did not love Him. It has always seemed to me, as well as I know my own heart, that I did love God.

Spencer: (With amazement) Why did you never tell me this before?

Mrs. N.: I was afraid you would think me better than I am.

Spencer: And do you hate sin?

Mrs. N.: I have always hated it, (if I can judge of my own feelings,) ever since I can remember.

Spencer: Why do you hate sin?

Mrs. N.: Because it offends God, it is wrong, and because it makes me unhappy.

Spencer: Do you desire to be free from it?

Mrs. N.: Yes, I do, if I know anything at all of my own desires. . . .

Spencer:— Don't you think that these feelings, which you have now expressed, are evidences of true religion?

Mrs. N.: I should think so, perhaps, if I had not always had them. But I have never been sensible of any particular change. I have always felt so since I was a little child, as long as I can remember.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 106f.



This last exchange was devastating to Spencer. It immediately opened his eyes to the folly of his approach with Mrs. N.

I was utterly amazed! Here I had been for years aiming to make conviction of sin more deep, instead of binding up the broken heart! I had been aiming to lead a sinner to Christ, instead of showing her that she was not a stranger, and an outcast! I was ashamed of myself! I had often talked to this precious woman as if she were an alien from God, and an enemy; and now it appeared as if all the while she had been one of His most affectionate children, her very anguish consisting in this,--that she loved Him no more, and could not get assurance of His love towards her. It was true she had never told me these things before; but that did not satisfy me. I ought to have learnt them before. I went out and wept bitterly! I felt as if I had been pouring anguish into the crushed heart of the publican, as he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"<sup>1</sup>

The interaction between Spencer and Mrs. N. has been treated at some length as it clearly depicts possible dangers of pumping for confession. If Mrs. N. had not had something of a neurotic need to be punished, it can safely be assumed that Spencer's coercion would have served to break their relationship almost from the beginning. As it was, Spencer's ministrations merely fed her need, frustrating as it was to him.

The burden of preventing such disasters in interaction rests primarily with the Confessor, as it can correctly be assumed that the Counselee-Confessant is feeling defensive in the first place. Further, as the Confessant feels blocked, isolated and estranged because of the guilt

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

involved in his situation, he is normally hypersensitive to the need to defend himself from further danger. Hence, there exists a crucial need for the Confessor to provide a quality of relationship which will mitigate the peril of threat faced by the Confessant. And such a quality results in large measure from the degree of the Confessor's own self-knowledge. As Bonnell states:

Every trained therapist soon becomes aware that his own personality conflicts and inner needs are reflected in the problems of his patients. He can never thoroughly understand the difficulties of others until he first comes to grips with his own.<sup>1</sup>

The value of such self-awareness was recognized by Freud, also, in that he made a particular point of recommending that all psychoanalysts themselves undergo psychoanalysis. Within the theological framework it is significant that Daniel Day Williams, in his book The Minister and the Care of Souls, devotes one whole chapter to "The Minister's Self-Knowledge."<sup>2</sup> He states:

Self-knowledge includes but transcends intellectual understanding. It means recognition of one's motives, fears, hopes, and habitual reactions. It requires emotional balance, the capacity to face one's past, confess one's limitations and capacities, and establish one's ultimate loyalties.<sup>3</sup>

Williams makes a further statement which directly affects the work of the pastoral counselor: "Theology by itself

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<sup>1</sup>Bonnell, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Williams, op. cit., pp. 95-121.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

never gives sufficient guidance in dealing with human problems, because those problems involve dimensions of experience which have to be understood psychologically."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is noted that the counselor's self-knowledge figures importantly within both the theological and psychological frameworks.

A further characteristic of the interaction in confession has to do with the object of the confession. Here there is a definite contrast between the theological and psychological relationships. The religious confessor, and the confessant coming to him, will both be aware of God as the transcending third party in their interactions. Generally, the religious confessant will seek out this confessor precisely because he feels guilty about his relationship with God. Hence, God becomes the real object of the confession, even though it may take initial expression in confession to the religious counselor. The sensitive counselor will realize this from the outset; and one of the aims of his therapeutic endeavor will be to assist this confessant to work through his feelings so that he may make a confession of sin directly to God.

The very fact of God being the end object of religious confession may result in complications stemming from the confessant's perception of God. If he understands God

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

as a terrible judge of wrath, his personal guilt feelings may be so severe that confession is impaired. Even more important, it may make him unable to realize or appropriate God's forgiveness. These situations, too, will need to be carefully worked through by the confessor.

Also, the fact of God being the object of confession has deeper psychological dimensions. The confessant may have very real conflicts about his relationship with God as his heavenly Father which are the results of projections from his relationship with his earthly father, and other significant authority figures in his life.<sup>1</sup> Again there are definite distortions involved, of both God and natural father, including ambivalent feelings towards both, which require working through in the process of counseling.

Perhaps the largest single obstacle to be recognized within the three-party triangle of theological confession results from the confessant's tendency to identify the confessor with God himself. This obstacle may actually be engendered by a minister's tendency to "play God." However, a conscientious pastor will be careful to clarify the three-part relationship, stressing the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, thereby indicating that he is also a finite man, fully susceptible to sin, and thereby also living solely by God's grace.

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<sup>1</sup>This form of conflict played a large part in Martin Luther's development, as pointed out by Erikson, op. cit., pp. 49-97.

A further implication of theological confession stems from the confessant's realization of his continuing relationship with his confessor-pastor. The awareness of shared secret guilt may be especially painful to him; therefore, the pastor must, by his character and behavior, let it be known to the confessant that he respects the secrecy of the confessional and the confessant. As William Hulme explains the situation:

The content of confession is frequently of an intimate nature. To a sensitive counselee it is somewhat of a shock to realize that the pastor knows something about him that he probably hoped to keep to himself. The pastor is not like a secular counselor who passes out of one's life at the close of the counseling relationship. Instead he and the counselee may continue to rub shoulders in many different roles in the days ahead. Consequently the pastor is a constant reminder to the counselee that somebody else knows. Therefore it is very important that the pastor give every evidence both during and after the counseling relationship that he accepts the counselee as he is--that his secret sins and shames in no way influence the pastor's opinion of him or his worth.<sup>1</sup>

The object of confession within the distinctly psychological framework is generally somewhat different. The confessant's relationship with God may be involved as an aspect of his basic feelings about himself, other people, and life in general. But God is not usually focused upon, apart from recognizing the religious influence (e.g., God, church, minister, etc.) in conscience formation and in explanation of guilt feelings, or as the individual's

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<sup>1</sup>Hulme, op. cit., p. 48.

perception of God pertains to his particular problem. Further, interaction in psychological confession is largely two-part, involving therapist and patient. The thrust of such confession may be extremely varied, coming into focus in proportion to the therapist's own actual involvement in the situation.

Of more crucial importance than the object of confession within the more psychological orientation is the interaction which takes place between therapist and patient which Freud described as "transference." Anna Freud defines transference as "all those impulses experienced by the patient in his relation with the analyst which are not newly created by the objective analytic situation but have their source in early . . . object relations and are now merely revived under the influence of the repetition compulsion."<sup>1</sup> Hence, transference happens automatically, being generated by the counseling relationship, and

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<sup>1</sup>Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense (London: The Hogarth Press, Ltd., 1937), p. 18. It is significant to note that, in contrast with Freudian analysis, Carl Rogers states: "As we examine our clinical experience in client-centered therapy and our recorded cases, it would appear to be correct to say that strong attitudes of a transference nature occur in a relatively small minority of cases, but that such attitudes occur in some degree in the majority of cases" (Client-Centered Therapy, p. 199). Rogers would explain this difference in that his methodology calls for focusing primarily on conscious material rather than unconscious, with the result that intense transference relationships are not formed. However, the writer questions Rogers' conclusion, holding that the non-directive approach tends to foster, rather than hinder, transference.

consisting of the patient's own early emotions which are now projected upon the authority figure of the therapist.

Karl Menninger understands transference as only one aspect, albeit the central one, of an overall experience of regression which is induced in and by the analytic situation.<sup>1</sup> He describes psychoanalytic treatment as a two-party transaction, involving a "contract" which is mutually binding on both parties. Accordingly, it is within this contractual relationship that the interaction is experienced.

Given the privilege to say whatever one is thinking to a listener who refrains from excessive or discouraging interruption, an individual seeking therapeutic help will experience both a gratification and a growing frustration, which lead to the denudation of the original wish to be cured and its replacement with more primitive, buried wishes and the employment of techniques that once applied to expectations of other kinds from other persons for whom the therapist is substituted. With this regressive trend go fluctuations and variations in the "I" concept, or self-estimate, including body image and ego-ideal. This regression proceeds in waves and cycles of alternating attitudes, with frequent "surfacing" and realigning. By maintaining a steady position of non-reaction and an optimum degree of frustration, the therapist assists the process of self-visualization, objectification, and stabilization which represents aspects of the self-knowledge enabling an abandonment of the regressive position and progressive return to "health."<sup>2</sup>

Menninger understands this regression to take place in a step-by-step schematic form within the therapist-patient interaction. He admits that the regression is

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<sup>1</sup>Menninger, Theory of Psychoanalytic Technique, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 43f.

never standard but suggests that it may be partially experienced by the patient in this manner:

1. I am suffering (and have suffered) in this way and that way, thus and thus and thus.
2. I don't want to suffer thus and thus and thus. (Analyst inquires.)
3. I want the analyst, by fully understanding my suffering, to cure me or relieve me. (Analyst says nothing.)
4. (Patient goes on.) In order that he may do so, I will explain more fully how I have long suffered in this way and sometimes in that way, formerly in that way and now in this way. (Analyst listens.)
5. By now surely the analyst understands me and could, if he would, counsel and advise me and prevent my having to suffer in these ways. (The analyst remains essentially silent.)
6. I have told him everything, now--well, nearly everything--he is omnipotent and omniscient--and he could probably take away my suffering almost by magic.
7. Surely he realizes how I suffer, surely he knows how much I want his help. But he is silent. Why? When is he going to help me? Why doesn't he? (Analyst still silent.)
8. I may as well confess. Of course I knew I would have to tell him at last. He knew I had done such things; he must have known. He was waiting for me to tell it all; now I have done so. I feel ashamed, but relieved.
9. He does not scold me, nor seem shocked. He makes no comments. Is he perhaps angry? Is he laughing? (Analyst asks one or two questions.)
10. I am getting nowhere, in spite of my confession. I still suffer this way and that way. Yet he is so good to listen, so patient, so calm, so understanding.
11. If he could only accept me, believe me, pity me--helpless, weak and guilty as I am. But how can he?
12. I wish he would talk to me--scold me, praise me, tell me I'm not impossible, or even say he liked me a little. I've tried so hard to please him in the ways I have always thought worked best. But I don't seem to. (Analyst comments briefly.)
13. Regardless of his coldness, I do like him, I love him anyway. But how can he love me--or even like me? No one does, no one can. No one really ever did. I must go on, I guess.
14. I don't like this fellow at all; he is crude and rude, he is unsympathetic, he is indifferent, he is impossible to please. He doesn't understand me. He is



stupid, a fraud, a quack, an ignoramus. I will tell him so. (Analyst is silent.)<sup>1</sup>

Although the above numbering is deceptive, and does not specify the length of time involved at each step, it is noted that the confession takes place at the eighth level. That is, although initial unburdenings take place from the beginning of treatment, the really significant material is not uncovered until the relationship is well formed. It is further noted, in parallel with theological confession, that the patient has definitely humbled himself, particularly in levels six and seven, prior to making his confession. It is also at these levels that the dynamics of transference would be most pronounced. That is, as the patient's perception of the analyst results in the unrealistic roles or identities (e.g., omnipotent, omniscient, etc.) unconsciously ascribed to him in the course of regression, his reactions to the therapist become operative as derived from his own earlier experience with similar authority figures. This again would foster a humbling attitude which would promote confession. Theodor Reik even claims that transference may occasion neurotic symptoms resulting in an unconscious compulsion to confess.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, there is little doubt that transference will serve to

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<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 58f. (Italics mine.)

<sup>2</sup>Theodor Reik, The Compulsion to Confess (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959), p. 196.

bring to light confessional material from the unconscious not otherwise available to the confessant. And this is to his ultimate advantage, for, as Fritz Kunkel comments, "The superficial deeds which he remembers can be easily told and are easily plucked, but these are only the poisonous flowers blossoming above the earth. The roots remain in the unconscious, and they will thrive again and again."<sup>1</sup>

Kunkel's statement underscores what must honestly be faced as one of the limitations of most pastoral counseling: it deals mainly with conscious guilt, without getting at the unconscious roots. At the same time it is recognized that, as indicated earlier, the pastoral counselor is able to use the sacraments and liturgy of the Church to at least deal indirectly with unconscious guilt which is often inaccessible to the analyst as well.<sup>2</sup>

Yet there are definite values in the confession of conscious guilt alone. Van Nostrand has reported the values of the confessional.<sup>3</sup> Carl Rogers further states the value of emotional catharsis in that: (1) the client gains emotional release from those feelings and attitudes which he has been repressing; (2) this release enables the client to clarify more realistically the adjustments needed in his situation; (3) the client's understanding of himself

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<sup>1</sup>Fritz Kunkel, In Search of Maturity (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 252.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 162.    <sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 107.

is improved as his need for rationalizations, alibis, denials, and false fronts is removed; (4) the client's acceptance of himself as a person of worth affords a realistic point of departure for progress in maturity.<sup>1</sup>

Underlying all these values is the fact that conscious level confession is often what is particularly required to bring the lonely and estranged individual out of the abyss of separation and into the sunshine of fellowship --both with God and fellow man.

However, it must be acknowledged that even when unconscious material is brought up, and even confessed, its conscious realization does not always remain long with the confessant. This fact is verified by a verbatim response offered by Carl Rogers which reveals the feelings experienced by "Mrs. Oak," a woman in counseling, following an earlier confession made to her therapist:

C.: (Long pause.) I think perhaps I'm going to tell you something else I found out about myself, and I'm not too eager and it's not too pleasant. No, that isn't quite so, but anyway, we will find out whether it's pleasant or unpleasant; whether that's the right word to use. Going back, it was so very difficult for me to get to any part of the sexual problem at all, very difficult. And, do you know, I haven't the slightest idea of what I said, not the slightest. And yet, which of course, I mean, wouldn't the critics make something of that! I should know, you see, but I don't know and I really think, I really think, it's because I don't want to know; I have no need to know, I just don't want to know. And yet, miracle, I mean the areas

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<sup>1</sup>Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, pp. 171f.

that have been walled up are no longer walled up. It's unbelievable, again it's an unbelievable thing.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of her lack of conscious awareness of the full content of her confession (admittedly because of suppression), it is noted that the cited confessant definitely experienced the break out of isolation and loneliness which genuine confession affords. For, in her words, "the areas that have been walled up are no longer walled up." So, perhaps when considering the experience of confession from the confessant's own point of view, it might be helpful to explain it as "The Experience of Self-Discovery." At least this is the way one of this writer's early counseling clients felt when he wrote the following essay to describe the therapeutic process:

#### HELLO, MYSELF

##### --the Experience of Self Discovery

I toyed with the sub-title "the experience of psychoanalysis" and rejected it because I feared it might give an inaccurate slant to the process I wish to describe. There are no psychiatric couches, word association, ink blot tests--none of the trappings found in the literature, drama and cartoons on the subject.

There are only a counsellor (with a notebook and pencil, to be sure), a couple of chairs, a small desk and myself. There is only talk. The actual subject matter of this talk is too detailed and complex to enter into here. This is about the experience of self-discovery, one of the most thrilling (and sometimes chilling) of human experiences.

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<sup>1</sup>Carl R. Rogers and Rosalind F. Dymond (eds.), Psychotherapy and Personality Change (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 338.

What led me to this chair vis-a-vis this pleasant-faced young man who will always remain something of a receptive shadow? How did I get here? A semi-facetious answer might be that I have been climbing these stairs to this door all my life. But a certain requirement is a specific life crisis that leads to an urgent need to "know thyself."

The first visit is like plunging into icy water. Almost any excuse would suffice to postpone it. But there can be no excuse and no postponement. The die is cast; there are only these stairs to climb, this door to knock on.

The amenities are observed, arrangements are arranged--and I am face to face with a beginning. It is a halting, stammering description of what seems to be my problem. An occasional query guides me through a superficial description of myself. I am left with the impression of having talked a great deal and amazement that the hour has passed so quickly. I depart somewhat irritated with the whole procedure. I haven't learned a thing I didn't already know. I am left with only a few interesting questions to chew on regarding present and past relationships. On the whole it seems hardly worthwhile to return.

But return one must. Next week and the next and the next, until the weeks are punctuated by this strangely detached hour of self-analysis. For once "immersed in the destructive element" (as old Stein urged in Lord Jim) there is no turning back. It is necessary to strike out through the haze for the other shore.

One does this work oneself. It is at first a poor, plodding affair. The facts dragged forth are superficial, although they do not seem so at the time. Pregnant channels of thought are resisted. Key questions may be met with embarrassed silence or even faltering deception. The hurts of childhood are well-buried. The digging is slow. Occasional insights lighten the way, but the weekly session often ends in that same frustrated feeling with nothing but those interesting questions to mull over for next time.

Oddly, these weekly "assignments" are rejected. The questing mind is guided unconsciously along other more fertile paths of inquiry. For I choose my own subjects for discussion. In fact I discuss these subjects ad infinitum throughout the week--with myself and with the patient wife, who is in this with me come what may. For whatever happens in this psychoanalytic process happens within the subject's own mind.

And what does happen? One day a major breakthrough occurs. A solitary drive (the automobile is an

excellent site for reflection), an intense talk with the listening eagerly encouraging wife--and, quite suddenly, quite magically, a veil is torn aside. A part of the wounded past is seen clearly for the first time--and understood.

Yes, the past is the subject of most of our interior revelations. If only our parents had undergone psychoanalysis! Or their parents! It seems almost as though they have bequeathed us their mangled personalities.

The new insight is brought into the next weekly session like a trophy. It is greeted with beaming enthusiasm. What a fine insight! But there must be scores--perhaps hundreds of such nuggets of truth to be mined. Some of them are the product of intense mental effort. Some just seem to "be" in the receptive mind. They appear like a gift from the unconscious mind. Some insights may be "hooked" during the counselling period.

For these analytic times are genuine work. The flow of words unleashed in this fleeting hour is torrential. For the subject has been mulled over and examined from every angle all week. Or perhaps a chance remark may set the hour of discussion on an entirely different course.

I leave the session utterly drained. The output of psychic energy must be terrific, for there is actual physical fatigue. Mental tension may reach the point of headache. And yet the digging begins again with an eagerness to chew over new discoveries with that o, so patient! wife.

And sometimes the subject leaves the session with a sense of deep depression. For penetrating the past reveals the ineptness, the mean, the ugly, the trivial that must be in any past. But the self-discovery process seems to emphasize these crisis and tension-producing areas. When the shams which covered them are stripped away, there seems to be nothing left. Is this wretched personality just uncovered worth the effort? Were there no happy times back there? This failure to produce a balanced view of the past may be a genuine flaw in the method.

But the pendulum swings back. A new self-evaluation emerges. The "good" reasons are gradually being replaced by the "real" ones. Some of the past--once shrouded in forgetfulness, distortion, childish emotion--now stands revealed. Anger and hate and fear and frustration--those useless, wasteful emotions--are being replaced by understanding and confidence--yes, and I hope by courage.

The exploration of the "roles" one plays and the growing awareness of the self that others see bring new

and practical changes. There is an almost automatic improvement in posture, an amazing cessation of a nagging backache of many years' duration, an actual increase in potency. The voice by conscious effort is deepened by several tones (and gets louder, too, says the good wife who has listened to it so much).

When is the process finished? Not yet. Not now. There are more dark corners to explore. And explore them I must. Perhaps the ending of self-discovery will be as difficult as its beginning.

In a large sense, it may never end. My minds have acquired a habit: the conscious and the unconscious one are better friends now. Perhaps they will cooperate in continued self-analysis.

But let us not "wallow in the past like old Proust." We have faced it fair and square. We acknowledge it. And so, within our limitations, we are free of it. There is a future to discover too. There are things to do and new abilities to do them. Hello, myself!

### Summary

While private confession within the Roman Sacrament of Penance is confined to appointed hours in the Catholic Confessional Box, Protestant confession may take place at any time and in any place. It commonly occurs in the pastor's study, while the pastor is counseling with a parishioner. The confession will be facilitated to the degree that the pastor is permissive and accepting, rather than judgmental and authoritarian, so that God's love can truly be mediated. In any setting, theological confession acknowledges the transcendent presence of God, forming a three-part triangular relationship with the confessor and confessant.

In comparison, psychotherapeutic confession generally takes place in the therapist's office, where therapist

and patient are engaged in a unique contractual relationship. God's healing power may well be operative here as well, even though his presence is not formally acknowledged, as the therapist sets forth an atmosphere of freedom and understanding so that the patient is given opportunity to realize his God-given potential.

The possible degrees of confessor-confessant interaction vary widely, largely depending upon the setting and personalities of the participants. God, as the transcendent object of theological confession, greatly broadens the unburdening experience in the sense that his divine forgiveness is operative in the process of redemption. Transference mysteriously intensifies the analytic relationship as the patient becomes aware of buried layers of his own personality. Yet it is misleading to pointedly discuss confession from the particular frameworks of theology and psychology, as there is much dynamic overlapping between the two disciplines. In both cases the experience of confession is difficult--sometimes extremely so--but vitally significant. For in both contexts the result of depth level confession is new freedom.



## CHAPTER V

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF CONFESSION

#### The Foundational Relationship

The final chapter of this study presents the author with the opportunity, if not the necessity, of pointedly tying together strings of discussion which have heretofore been left somewhat open-ended. The most basic of these untied presentations has to do with the assumed relationship between the disciplines of theology and psychology which provides the foundation for this entire investigation.

There are a number of alternative positions in which the relationship between theology and psychology may be understood. John David Maguire suggests four expressions evident in contemporary consideration:<sup>1</sup>

1. "Relating" theology and psychology to each other by, in substance, unalterably pitting them against one another. The assumption here is that theology has a changeless norm, once for all delivered, so that adverse evidence from empirical psychology must acquiesce in the face of received revelation. The result is that there is

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<sup>1</sup> John David Maguire, "The Theological Uses of Psychoanalysis: Patterns, Problems, and Proposals," Religion in Life, XXXI, No. 2 (Spring, 1962), 169-184.

no genuine interpenetration of disciplines, the traffic generally being only one-way.<sup>1</sup>

2. Making a theory-practice distinction. Here theology is understood to provide the theory, while psychology, with its clinically discerned and therapeutically confirmed "facts," provides the practice for interpreting the theory. The traffic again is only one-way; yet now pre-eminence is given to psychological facts (without acknowledging the subjective valuation involved in ascertaining these facts), and Christian doctrines are to be reformulated in light of them.<sup>2</sup>

3. Directly identifying and interchanging concepts of theology with those of psychology, with the implied assumption that their distinctiveness is only one of categorical labels (e.g., original sin equals id, actual sin equals neurosis, conscience equals super-ego, soul equals self, justification equals acceptance, faith equals affirmative thinking). A further implication of this methodology is the assumption that theological categories are only empty shells which each generation fills by describing its experience in terms of the verbal coinage currently in

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<sup>1</sup>Maguire describes this as the position held by the Roman Catholic Church and Missouri Synod Lutherans.

<sup>2</sup>In illustration of this position Maguire cites, among others, William Graham Cole's Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis, and Robert H. Bonthius' Christian Paths to Self-Acceptance.

circulation (which now is psychological<sup>1</sup>). This position does not make a distinction between the man-to-man, or intramundane framework of psychology, in comparison with the transcendent nature of the man-and-God relationships operative in theology. Consequently, it tends to limit the quality of experience to that recognizable within the human sphere alone.<sup>2</sup>

4. Holding that contemporary man's problems in the age of anxiety are experienced and conceptualized in terms of psychology, and asserting that theology provides the answers to the psychologically framed questions.<sup>3</sup> Yet this position is deceptive:

<sup>1</sup>See the quotation from Overstreet, supra, pp. 130f.

<sup>2</sup>Maguire suggests Charles Stinnette's Anxiety and Faith (Greenwich, Connecticut: Seabury Press, 1955) and Randolph C. Miller's Be Not Anxious (Greenwich, Connecticut: Seabury Press, 1957), as illustrative of this position. He affirms that such easy identifications may be very deceptive. Yet, Maguire holds that, with great caution and respect for the full dimensions of both disciplines, some parallel understandings may be mutually beneficial. For instance, he proposes that the psychological concept of narcissism can profitably be considered in relation to the theological category of sin (pp. 182f.). In like manner, David E. Roberts, in his Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 104, states: "At certain points there is a remarkable parallel between the Pauline-Augustinian conception of original sin and the psycho-analytic conception of neurosis." Also see Welk, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Maguire recognizes as exponents of this position such works as James A. Pike's Beyond Anxiety: The Christian Answer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), and Lewis J. Sherrill's Guilt and Redemption (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1945), as well as Paul Tillich "a large part of the time" (p. 176).

This procedure jaundices the issue, for diagnoses dictate prescriptions. One's analysis of a situation controls the kind of antidote proposed. The form of the question asked delimits and dictates the kind of answer that can be given. Analyses are never merely neutral, but always done in terms of certain assumed categories. Thus if one raises "the question" psychologically, then only those features of theological insight which "fit" the contours of the question can be offered in response. Clearly certain elements in the theologian's medicine chest of immortality may never get called into play. God as Good Creator, God as Righteous Judge, God as Claimant as well as Giver, God the Fire as well as Friend: How can these fundamental insights be rehearsed if theology is reduced simply to answering psychological questions? The danger with this pattern, then, is that of reducing the whole of theological truth to a panacea, to no more than a means of allaying the anxieties, guilts, and inhibitions which plague our life. Revelation is domesticated, the tradition becomes a pharmacopoeia stocked mainly with tranquilizers, and the theological "answer" is impoverished to a blandly therapeutic, fulfilling counterpart to our needs as we naturally understand them.<sup>1</sup>

For the purpose of this study, theology and psychology are both understood to be empirical sciences, but with different categories and principles of interpretation, with the result that they may each operate independent of the other. The general acknowledgment of the right of a particular science to use its own categories; and not those originating with some other science, is one of the ways in which a particular investigation is recognized as being itself an independent science. As Alan Richardson states: "A science may properly be said to be independent when it has made good its title to employ categories which are not reducible to those of any other science; otherwise it would

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<sup>1</sup>Maguire, op. cit., p. 176.

be merely a subdivision or department of the science whose categories it borrowed."<sup>1</sup> In describing theology as an empirical science, Richardson continues:

There is to-day a growing recognition of the truth that theology is an empirical science, properly so called. By theology we here mean the study of Christian existence in history and to-day, that is, of all that appertains to the believing and witnessing Christian community, the Church, both in the past and in the present. Thus, theology is a different science, though a related one, from either the psychology of religion, which is a branch of psychology, or the comparative study of religion (Religionsgeschichte). Like any other science, theology deals with the facts of human experience; it does not (as many apparently suppose) deal with hypothetical objects, or things about which there is a reasonable possibility of doubt. The science of theology is rendered necessary by the existence of the Church, just as the existence of physical objects makes necessary the science of physics.<sup>2</sup>

It is noted in this connection that Alfred North Whitehead has also commented:

The dogmas of religion are the attempts to formulate in precise terms the truths disclosed in the religious experience of mankind. In exactly the same way the dogmas of physical science are attempts to formulate in precise terms the truths disclosed in the sense-perception of mankind.<sup>3</sup>

Whitehead's statement points up the distinctiveness of the two disciplines, for the "religious experience of mankind" suggests the transhistorical reference of theology, while the "sense-perception of mankind" generally

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<sup>1</sup>Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>From Whitehead's Religion in the Making, as quoted by Richardson, ibid., p. 50.

pertains to psychological concepts of intramundane existence. Putting this in another way, the primary focus of psychology is upon the human personality, while "the primary datum of theology is the faith, worship, and witness of the living Church."<sup>1</sup> The result of this situation is, as Maguire points out, that "theology and psycho-analysis are not coordinate systems, the range of realities to which they refer are not identical, and hence they are not feature for feature comparable."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, there has been no attempt in this study to force conformity between the categories of theology and psychology. Rather, attention has been directed to recognize the appropriate categories within their respective frameworks, in the single endeavor to ascertain their distinctive understandings of a common feature: confession.

A helpful manner of presenting the connection between theology and psychology as experienced by the single individual is afforded by Andras Angyal's concept of the "biosphere" as "the realm or sphere of life."<sup>3</sup> It is within this biosphere that the individual comes to know his own "autonomy,"<sup>4</sup> or selfhood, as he experiences self-awareness in relation to his "heteronomy," or "the collective

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 62.    <sup>2</sup>Maguire, op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>3</sup>Angyal, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

autonomies of the other-than-self."<sup>1</sup> To some degree an individual's autonomy and heteronomy may be understood simply in terms of the individual organism in relation to its environment, and it is in this realm that the individual may largely be considered as the object of psychological consideration alone.<sup>2</sup> Yet individual autonomy and heteronomy are actually more than these entities alone, as in a wholistic analysis the whole is more than the sum of its parts. As Angyal declares:

The human individual, besides its general phylogenetic integration, is a member of a family, a member of a social group, a participant in a culture, a part of nature, and, in the broadest sense, a part of a cosmic order.<sup>3</sup>

It is in consequence of this larger context within the individual's biosphere that Angyal introduces his concept of "homonomy" by which he refers to the integration of the individual into superindividual units which transcend his own organism. In a sense, homonomy refers to the dynamic of relating autonomy to heteronomy so that each is still autonomous in itself, yet reacting to the vitality of

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<sup>1</sup>This definition of "heteronomy" was offered by David D. Eitzen in a lecture on March 21, 1962. Angyal states, simply, "By autonomy is meant 'self-government,' and by heteronomy 'government from the outside,'" (op. cit., p. 39).

<sup>2</sup>This is commonly the sphere of attention of the so-called "cultural" psychologists: Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Harry Stack Sullivan. Also, supra, p. 168, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Angyal, op. cit., p. 168.

relationship with the other. Because of this dynamic characteristic, Angyal writes of a "trend towards homonomy," by which he means "a trend to be in harmony with superindividual units, the social group, nature, God, ethical world order, or whatever the person's formulation of it may be."<sup>1</sup> It is in terms of homonomy, or the sense of seeking valid partness in relationship with the transcending whole, that the individual experiences meaningful existence. And it is in this realm of superindividual relationships that theology comes into focus, as it pertains to the God-man relationship, yet being at all times fully cognizant of man-man relationships. Hence, theology embraces man's entire biosphere with a transcendent awareness. Theology's primary dictum is faith, and, as Richardson points out, "Christian faith always transcends and to some extent negates the categories of all non-Christian thinking."<sup>2</sup> Yet this negation to which Richardson refers pertains not so much to non-theological faith being erroneous as being, rather, of a different order.

This, then, is the foundational relationship between theology and psychology which underlies this study. Both disciplines are recognized as completely valid within themselves, and each complements the other in the sense of more clearly verifying the richness of human experience.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 172.    <sup>2</sup>Richardson, op. cit., p. 25.



Both are needful and, accordingly, are essential for this investigation. Yet because of the generally non-comparable nature of their respective categories, attempts at drawing parallels between the two sciences must proceed with definite caution. This discussion of the foundational relationship serves as the undergirding for considering further implications of confession. As a suggestion for further research beyond this study, a very meaningful contribution to knowledge could be made by a detailed study of the respective categories of theology and psychology, directed towards ascertaining their parallel and conflicting concepts, aiming towards more precisely setting forth the relationship between the two disciplines.

### Problems of Confession

Precisely because the activity of confession is such a tension-laden experience, it is understandable that there are very real problems involved. The anguished souls who undertake to confess, whether in the context of theology or psychology, are commonly so blocked, crippled, and estranged within all their relationships that they are particularly susceptible to difficulties.

Leslie D. Weatherhead suggests five possible dangers in confession:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion, and Healing, pp. 448f.

1. There is a danger of exaggerated introspection which can end in the misery of a man who looks for sin in all his actions and sees all his motives as impure.

2. There is a danger lest a man should confess the same sin over and over again, until his religious life and devotional acts make a more powerful auto-suggestion of the depths to which he has fallen in the past than of the heights he is determined to scale in the future.

3. There is a danger with another type of person that he should lightly regard his sins, thinking that, in any case, he will go to Confession in a few days and wipe the slate clean again. Confession thus lessens the moral effort to overcome sin.<sup>2</sup>

4. There is a danger that he should exaggerate his guilt at the Confessional for neurotic reasons. . . .

5. There is a danger, seen, for example, amongst some of the more neurotic members of fanatical sects to confess, or "share," sins which make the sinner "interesting" to his fellows and bring him into the limelight.

This writer does not at all disagree with Weatherhead's cited points of danger but feels they may be misleading in being in no wise exhaustive. Actually, it is foolhardy to attempt any complete detailed listing of specific dangers, as the very dynamic character of the experience of confession would militate against covering all possibilities. Rather, it is suggested that underlying most, if not all, of the problems involved in confession (including those presented by Weatherhead) is a single dynamic mechanism: the confessant's reaction to guilt.

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<sup>1</sup>An example of such behavior can be seen in the early monastery life of Martin Luther, supra, p. 90. Also, note the closing petitions of the early Egyptian's "negative confession," supra, pp. 7f.

<sup>2</sup>This is one of the more obvious weaknesses of the Roman Catholic practice of making confession routine and prescribed.

Guilt is a concept with relevance for both theology and psychology. It is not synonymous with sin (which is a definite religious category), for sin may or may not occasion guilt--yet the concept of guilt often includes sin (when sin involves a known transgression of God's law), or, rather, the feeling of guilt may be because of sin (when sin is understood to refer to that which separates God and man).<sup>1</sup> Within this study the concept of guilt has been discussed within the framework of psychology, although as defined, it may have ethical, moral, and/or religious implications.<sup>2</sup> The point is that guilt suggests the realm of personal responsibility or culpability, while sin has reference to the larger dimensions of the God-man relationship.

Robert E. Elliott suggests that guilt has a double meaning:

It may refer to inner feelings; it may refer to a state or form of existence, and there may be an apparently remarkable disparity between the two. We read for instance of a shocking crime, the rape and dismemberment of a little girl, by a man who displays on review of the events little or no identifiable conscience. He may have a clear intellectual knowledge that what he did was "wrong," in the sense of forbidden or disapproved by the community, but he may have no recognizable signs of what we could call guilty conscience. He doesn't seem to "feel" guilty. At the other extreme, consider the self-conscious person who drops a fork at a formal banquet and thereafter cringes and twitches for a week under painful self-condemnation. This man feels as if he had committed a murder, the

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 71.      <sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 132.

first man about as guilty as if he had dropped a fork.<sup>1</sup>

The discrepancy between what may be described as the fact of guilt in contrast to a feeling of guilt has been the point of entry for psychology into an examination of guilt. For the psychologist's or psychiatrist's patient may be someone with an apparently sick or distorted conscience, with crushing or paralyzing guilt as part of a larger pattern of illness.<sup>2</sup> The therapist may also be involved with the person at the other extreme--the apparently conscienceless individual, sometimes known as a "psychopathic personality." In this instance, "the main pathological manifestation is the individual's action and behavior, and is based on his inability to experience certain interpersonal, social, and moral values."<sup>3</sup>

As concerns the experience of confession, it is the feeling of guilt rather than the fact of guilt which is of central importance. Accordingly, a "psychopathic personality" would not be concerned, as his absence of conscience would serve to deaden the feelings of guilt which might

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<sup>1</sup>Robert E. Elliott, "Guilt and Forgiveness," p. 2. This is an unpublished paper which was presented by Elliott, who is on the faculty of the Perkins School of Theology, to the Conference for Supervisors, Council for Clinical Training, held at Washington, D. C., October 24-26, 1960.

<sup>2</sup>It is this possibility to which Weatherhead makes reference in his fourth cited danger of confession, supra, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup>Maslow and Mittelmann, op. cit., p. 406.

otherwise result in motivation for unburdening. However, seen in this sense, guilt itself is a very positive emotion, as it definitely indicates the individual's awareness that something has gone wrong. As Anton T. Boisen informs:

Suffering may be looked upon as remedial. So long as the patient is suffering and has a true appreciation of the seriousness of the ordeal through which he is passing, there is ground for hope that his condition may improve.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this very feeling of guilt, even when seen positively, ushers in a deeper dimension of the problem.

As Elliott explains:

I am increasingly convinced that people who come to Protestant pastors (this doesn't apply to the Catholic confessional pattern) to make confession of sin or guilt are likely, whether they know it or not, to be asking for help in clarifying what it is they need to confess.<sup>2</sup>

Elliott's statement is, of course, of great importance for the work of the pastoral counselor (in addition to all religious workers). Further, it is directly parallel to the comment of Karl Menninger, who, in discussing the goals of therapy, writes, "One of our objectives might be said to be to get people's guilt feelings attached to the 'right' things."<sup>3</sup>

It is in this sense that guilt is related to the concept of anxiety. For the crippling sense of guilt which

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<sup>1</sup>Boisen, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Elliott, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Menninger, Theory of Psychoanalytic Technique, p. 171.

is commonly evident in people during confession is often free-floating and unspecific.

It may be described as guilt feeling seeking its source, and being unable to locate a source, attaching itself to one or another substitute objects. Rollo May and Paul Tillich have helped us to talk about anxiety this way. Anxiety strives to become fear, by finding an object to be afraid of, in relation to which one can take some kind of appropriate action. So persistent and deep guilt feelings may also seek an object, a thing to be guilty about, in relation to which confession, repentance and other reparatory activity can be undertaken.<sup>1</sup>

Such anxiety again highlights the need for the counselor to carefully work through the confessant's feelings, endeavoring to ascertain whether the guilt in the "presenting problem" is the actual source of the difficulty, or whether such guilt might be serving as a disguising or concealing sign obscuring the real source.

Even when guilt feelings are very specifically tied to a source, however, there is yet another problem which is definitely involved in the experience of confession. This is the degree of the individual confessant's personal acceptance of his responsibility for the guilt feeling. That is, it is a far different thing for a confessant to verbally recite a long list of transgressions which have happened "out there," than to acknowledge that these same transgressions were occasioned by his own volition. This distinction reflects one's controlling modes of reaction to frustration and defeat, along with guilt.

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, op. cit., p. 5.

In a class of students, for instance, given a test too difficult for them to handle adequately, and then asked individually about their failure, one can locate three modal forms of answer. One group blames the difficulty of the test: "It was too hard. It wasn't fair to give us that kind of test." Another group deals with the experience intrapunitively: "I didn't study hard enough. I didn't do as well as I should have." Leaving aside the third group that tends to negate the whole experience by saying, in effect: "It's not important; the test doesn't matter," one can point to the other two modes of response as potentially rather comprehensive ways of organizing one's experience of the world.<sup>1</sup>

-To the degree that the confessant does acknowledge his personal culpability in the confession, it may be said to be an internalized confession, as it is available to self-acceptance. Yet merely because such a confession is internalized does not mean that it is always healthy. Indeed, for some people guilt feelings are so internalized that they become an integral part of the individual's self-system. Feelings of "I must be bad, it must be my fault," may become so ingrained that to be without them would be chaotic. It is in this sense that guilt feelings may be seen not only in a positive light, but as representing a major attempt at living.

I submit that this is an important way to understand the tenacity with which pervasively guilty persons may cling to their guilt feelings, clinging as if their lives depended on it. In a real sense such a person's life may depend upon it. To surrender his guilt would be to surrender such a basic aspect of his self-image that he would no longer know who he was, unless the possibility of a new self-image and a new image of the world is presented to him in the form of a secure

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

relationship in which he can, in some sense, start over again and discover what the world is like.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, if the confession is externalized, by projecting the responsibility outward beyond the individual, it may definitely be termed unhealthy due to this very non-appropriation. For, as Boisen concludes:

Mental disorder seems thus primarily a matter of emotion and volition, of attitude and belief. Above all it arises out of a failure to organize these into a philosophy of life which will enable the individual to assimilate his new experiences and make decisions as to what to do in a given situation. Central in such an organization is some conception of the self and of its place in the universe, some conception of the role one is to fill and of the scale of values by which success or failure is to be judged. This organization of experience is infinitely delicate and complex. If we speak of this as the "philosophy of life" it must be understood that it includes not only the intellectual but also the emotional and volitional, not only that which is in the focus of attention, but the vast background of previous experience, possibly racial as well as individual.<sup>2</sup>

### The Efficacy of Confession

In this section the writer is necessarily dealing with further strings which have been left untied throughout

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Boisen, op. cit., p. 194. It is significant to note that this statement from Boisen incorporates two of the three attributes cited by Gordon W. Allport as indicative of a mature personality, namely, "the ability to objectify oneself, to be reflective and insightful about one's own life," and "some unifying philosophy of life, although not necessarily religious in type, nor articulated in words, nor entirely complete. But without the direction and coherence supplied by some dominant integrative pattern, any life seems fragmented and aimless." (The Individual and His Religion, p. 53.)



the whole study. In a very real sense this section faces the crucial question at the root of the entire investigation: What good is confession? In a more helpful mode this same question can be worded: When is confession efficacious?

When the above question is asked with regard to theological confession, it must be seen in relation to God's redemptive purpose for all mankind. Consequently, it can helpfully be asked: Is God's grace blocked without confession? The initial response based upon the biblical answer clearly stated in I John 1:9 ("If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness") would definitely be in the affirmative: yes, God's grace is blocked without confession. The "if" in the stated passage appears to make such forgiveness conditional in lieu of confession. Indeed, Edmund Smits informs, "Aquinas, with the whole Catholic Church, considers confession necessary for salvation. It is a divine right which necessitates every Christian to confess his sins. . . . The confession of sins is an act expressing the virtue of repentance."<sup>1</sup> It is certainly true that the prescribed confession included in the Roman

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund Smits, "Confession or Psychoanalysis?" This is an unpublished paper by a Professor of Practical Theology at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Sacrament of Penance is a necessary means of grace within the Catholic Sacramental system.<sup>1</sup>

But it appears that to insist upon the mandatory nature of confession as essential for salvation amounts to limiting God's redemptive power to this single activity, with perhaps untold violence to His full authority. Consequently, rather than being held to such a legalistic emphasis as is implied in the act of confession, this writer suggests that it is the attitude of the worshipper that is of determining importance. That is, an unwilling individual coerced into making a confession may outwardly hide his defiance and hostility under the influence of immediate pressure, and so fulfill a prescribed dictum. But this is distinctly different from the genuine humility of a worshipping believer who bows his creaturely pride before the creator, whether under the guise of confession or not. This form of unburdening is the truly redemptive relationship between God and man.

On an even deeper level than the confessant's attitude concerning confession is his motivation in response to God's invitation as stated in Matthew 11:28 ("Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"). That is, the confessant may be moved only to receive the "rest" (which receives much of its

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 109.

contemporary expression through the "peace of mind" and "power of positive thinking" cults<sup>1</sup>), without recognizing his covenant responsibility<sup>2</sup> of whole-hearted commitment to the Lord of the Church. The result is that this confessant may well have complied with the letter of the law in which the requirement of confession is formulated, yet he will actually be engaging in tragic self-deception. For the practice of confession resulting from such motivation is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer has called "cheap grace."

Bonhoeffer describes such "cheap grace" in terms of the two-faced rationalizations by the self-deceiving individual who claims that because he has already been saved by God's grace he can now compromise with the world's standards without aspiring to lead a new life.

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. . . . Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin. . . . Let the Christian rest content with his worldliness and with this renunciation of any higher standard than the world. He is doing it for the sake of the world rather than for the sake of grace. Let him be comforted and rest assured in his possession of this grace--for grace alone does everything. Instead of following Christ, let the Christian enjoy the consolations of His grace! That is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace which amounts to

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, see Norman Vincent Peale, The Power of Positive Thinking (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 25-29.

the justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs. Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

As Bonhoeffer suggests, the difference between "cheap grace" and the "costly grace" he advocates stems from the confessant's awareness of the full implications and dimensions of sin, understood as referring to that which separates the relationship between man and God.<sup>2</sup> Such an understanding of sin has a definite bearing on the confessant's sensitivity even to "hear" the pronouncement of absolution.

Absolution itself bears a vital function as concerns the efficacy of theological confession. It has been noted that Luther always stressed "the 'comfort of absolution,' which is the main thing in confession."<sup>3</sup> Further, Herwig Wagner states:

Generally, it is to obtain absolution that people confess. In the absolution the church exercises the special power given to it, thereby continuing the work of Christ. While the office of the keys is exercised under many forms of ecclesiastical practice, confession is the most distinguished form because it is the highest personal declaration of forgiveness. Here the

<sup>1</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953), pp. 37f.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 115.

declaration of forgiveness cannot be misunderstood as a general truth.<sup>1</sup>

But, unfortunately, this "highest personal declaration of forgiveness" can often become muddled if absolution is not made clear. Consider again the case of Carl, the seventeen-year-old hospital patient whose experience of confession to the hospital chaplain was treated in the previous chapter.<sup>2</sup> At the point where the cited verbatim excerpt ended, Carl had completed his confession. In his last response Carl had actually stated his desire for reconciliation into relationship with God ("I want to be able to go to church"). Further, he had indicated his thirst for absolution from God, symbolized by the chaplain ("That's why I needed to talk to you") and his general awareness that something needed to be done to rectify his situation ("I am going to try to be different, to make things different. But I don't know how"). The interview concluded in this manner:

Chaplain 20: There are an awful lot of answers that we don't have, but we keep living along looking for them. I think you need that shot now. I am going to be going in just a minute, so let's call the nurse. It may be a little while before she can come, anyway.

Carl 20: All right.

Ch.21: May I have a prayer with you before I go?

C.21: I need that pretty bad.

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<sup>1</sup>Herwig Wagner, "Confession and the Office of the Keys," trans. Edward Johnson, The Chicago Lutheran Seminary Record, LXIV, No. 3 (August, 1959), 9.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 203-211.

Ch.22: Gracious God, our Father, we know that Thou art a forgiving and continually loving God. We know that a curious part of the Christian good news is that in spite of what we are, you care anyway. Sometimes it's hard to feel the forgiveness because we feel the separation so much more and yet we know that forgiveness does happen, and because it happens, we can go on. We can pick up the pieces of whatever we have messed up and go on with our lives. Thank you, God, for this blessing, and help Carl to know your forgiveness. Help him again to become what he was; help him to move toward becoming the person you see in him. In the name of Him in whom we know thy forgiveness, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

C.22: Thank you. I am glad you came. I don't know what I would have done if I had to keep it all inside.

Ch.23: It makes a big difference to be able to talk about it, doesn't it?

C.23: Yes, it does. I guess it doesn't really change anything, and yet it does.

Ch.24: I'll be back to see you tomorrow if you are still here.

C.24: Thank you, I hope you will.<sup>1</sup>

The Chaplain in this interview clearly missed the opportunity to specifically declare God's forgiveness. In Ch.20 he did not respond to Carl's previous plea for help in any clear way, and his suggestion of prayer in Ch.21 seems more designed to relieve his own anxiety about the carrying out of his pastoral duties than to meet Carl's need. The closest he approaches to what might distantly have resemblance to absolution comes in the prayer itself, with its five-part reference to "forgiveness" and "forgiving." Yet such prayer, helpful though it undoubtedly was for Carl, was actually addressed to God Himself, with Carl

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 203 (n. 2).

only incidentally eavesdropping. As such, the prayer was a far cry from a direct pronouncement to Carl of God's forgiveness. In its essence, the prayer itself is valuable, but would have been much more meaningful had it followed Carl's personal absolution. Carl, too, seems to have been aware that something was missing, as his half-hearted response in C.23 appears to indicate. All of this discussion serves to point up the particular need for an external and declared forgiveness as from God Himself.

Because it is God who deals with him in confession, he needs the external declaration from his brother; he cannot be self-sufficient. For the sake of his own doubting conscience, it is necessary for him to receive this consolation from another. All this is linked, at its deepest point, with the vicarious satisfaction--with the fact that another person is the very one who, with an external decision, pronounces the assertion "for me."<sup>1</sup>

The case of Carl serves to call attention to another very important factor in considering the efficacy of confession: the matter of Satisfaction. As has been indicated, the Roman Catholic Church takes Satisfaction very seriously, specifically including it as the third aspect of their Sacrament of Penance.<sup>2</sup> Protestantism has generally not given it the same consideration, feeling that God's grace is unconditional. However, there may well be deeper psychological aspects to the whole problem which

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<sup>1</sup>Wagner, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 83 and pp. 87f.

Protestantism has not fully comprehended. For instance, in the presented confession of Carl, there may have been a real need for some form of satisfaction, in the form of restitution, or atonement, as a pre-condition before a pronouncement of God's absolution could have even been "heard." That is to say, Carl's statements with reference to the guilt he felt towards his girl in connection with his intimacies with her are ample evidence of his own damaged self-picture. For example, see C.11 ("I feel like I have ruined her for life"),<sup>1</sup> C.12 ("I can hardly face her again"),<sup>2</sup> C.13 ("I felt so awful"),<sup>3</sup> and C.17 ("I just hurt inside").<sup>4</sup> His guilt was so personally felt that it might have been impossible for him to even recognize a declaration of God's forgiveness had it been presented. Further, there are definite indications that Carl, too, was earnestly seeking for the opportunity to do something, as he exclaims (in C.18), "I want to do something. I need to do something."<sup>5</sup> This concern for restitution is in line with O. Hobart Mowrer's statement:

People do not merely "talk" themselves into sin; they act. And by the same token, I do not believe anyone ever talks himself out of sin. Again there must be action, and this action must involve not only confession, of an ultimately open type, but also "atonement." Confession without a sober program of expiation can be

<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 205.      <sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 205.      <sup>4</sup>Supra, p. 206.

<sup>5</sup>Supra, p. 206.



dangerous, in the sense of causing the individual to be overwhelmed with guilt and self-hatred. . . . If we can only understand man's true condition, ways will be found to overcome the apparent obstacles.<sup>1</sup>

The Chaplain seems to be well aware of Carl's feeling of need for restitution, as he responds to it consistently, as in Ch.16 ("If there were just something you could do," etc.)<sup>2</sup> and Ch.19 ("If only you could do something").<sup>3</sup> Yet these responses just seem to deepen Carl's feeling of helplessness, as evidenced by C.16 ("But what can I do or say?")<sup>4</sup> and C.17 ("How can I make it up to her?").<sup>5</sup> It may well be that if the Chaplain had clearly verbalized the

<sup>1</sup>0. Hobart Mowrer, The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion (Princeton, N. J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1961), p. 78. In considering Mowrer's thought, it is noted that he differs directly with Freud concerning the origin of anxiety: "In essence, Freud's theory holds that anxiety comes from evil wishes, from acts which the individual would commit if he dared. The alternative view here proposed is that anxiety comes, not from acts which the individual would commit but dares not, but from acts which he has committed but wishes that he had not. It is, in other words, a 'guilt theory' of anxiety rather than an 'impulse theory.' Stated in its most concise but abstract form, the difference between these two views is that the one holds that anxiety arises from repression that has been turned toward the id; whereas the other holds that anxiety arises from repression that has been turned toward the superego or conscience." (p. 26.) The result of this difference is that while Freud holds that repression takes place largely in the id, and structures his therapy accordingly (e.g., "Where id was, there let ego be," supra, p. 160), Mowrer feels that repression more correctly takes place in the super-ego. Hence, he is concerned for a more ego-centered, or conscious, acceptance of responsibility for morality, designed to lessen the super-ego's domination.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 205.      <sup>3</sup>Supra, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup>Supra, p. 206.      <sup>5</sup>Supra, p. 206.

content of Carl's wish to make restitution in some manner such as, "I need to make this restitution, because, as I see it, this is the only way in which I can forgive myself, and it is the only way to get God to forgive me, or to get you to forgive me,"<sup>1</sup> much of Carl's guilt could have been frankly faced and worked through so that a genuine pronouncement of God's forgiveness could have been appreciated and appropriated by Carl. On the other hand, such absolution might actually be more beneficially received after some form of actual restitution (with resultant increased self-acceptance) had been accomplished. Such a postponement of absolution is suggested by Alexander Schmemmann with a longer-range view in mind:

We must remember, however, that the refusal of absolution is not a punishment. Even excommunication in the Early Church was pronounced with the hope of healing the man. For the Church's purpose is to save, not to judge or condemn. The priest must always contemplate the total fate of man, strive at his conversion and not simply follow a formal norm of justice. We know that the Good Shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep in order to save just one. This leaves a great freedom to the Priest who must follow his priestly conscience, must pray before he decides anything and must never be satisfied with an external conformity, with "rules" and "prescriptions."<sup>2</sup>

These discussions of absolution, satisfaction, and

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<sup>1</sup>As suggested by James N. Lapsley, Jr., in commenting on Carl's case as presented in Christian Advocate, supra, p. 203 (n. 2).

<sup>2</sup>Alexander Schmemmann, "Some Reflections on Confession," St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly, V, No. 3 (Fall, 1961), 43f. (This journal is published by St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, New York City).

restitution in treating of the efficacy of confession lead to a consideration of the matter of spiritual direction. As has been indicated in this study, directive pastoral care has long been a characteristic of the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> Yet Protestantism has generally been quite ambivalent.

The Protestant hesitation over, or repudiation of the notion of "direction" is of course due to the fear of adopting a principle of control by a cleric that would be the negation of the common sixteenth century Protestant view. Yet it cannot be denied that Luther, Bucer, Calvin, Spener and countless other Protestants have written in quantity letters of "advice that tends" to Christian living, and often offered spiritual direction in that sense.<sup>2</sup>

The contemporary situation seems to be, in this writer's opinion, that while much of modern-day Protestantism gives lip-service to principles suggesting that it is not exercising undue human direction, the actual practice is often to the contrary. That is, the coercive, pressure tactics of Ichabod S. Spencer one hundred years ago<sup>3</sup> are not without present-day counterparts.

This is not to suggest that spiritual direction, in its essence, is harmful. When properly understood as included within the context of genuine Seelsorge, it is undoubtedly helpful. Max Thurian offers a most beneficial definition:

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 100-103.

<sup>2</sup>McNeill, History, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, pp. 217-222.

Spiritual direction or the cure of souls is a seeking after the leading of the Holy Spirit in a given psychological and spiritual situation. It means nothing other than the direction of a life by the Holy Spirit. The Church as such exercises the ministry of direction through her preaching, her liturgy, and the personal witness of her members. But the term "spiritual direction" is more particularly used to designate the search for the direction of the Holy Spirit in which a Christian engages with the help of a director.<sup>1</sup>

Such "spiritual direction," without pastoral coercion or domination, would certainly work towards increasing the efficacy of the confessant's unburdening. Thurian particularly stresses its merit by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in respecting the person of the confessant through following the Rogerian non-directive approach.

This method consists in the director listening and refusing to intervene in an authoritarian and categorical manner, so as the better to allow the person being directed to discover for himself, by prayer and meditation enlightened by the Word of God, what the will of the Holy Spirit is for him. Christian spiritual direction, so far from seeking to impose itself, tends thus to render itself superfluous.<sup>2</sup>

This writer particularly appreciates Thurian's comments concerning the distinction sometimes drawn between "the cure of souls" and "spiritual direction":

The distinction often made--not without an axe to grind, one feels--by a certain school of Protestant pastoral theology between the cure of souls and spiritual direction seems artificial. According to this view the cure of souls is the preaching of God's Word in private to an individual, while spiritual direction involves the intervention of psychological factors. A verdict is therefore given in favour of the cure of souls as against spiritual direction. Is it really possible to conceive of preaching, however objective,

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<sup>1</sup>Thurian, op. cit., pp. 69f.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

which does not involve psychological expression of some kind? The pastoral care of souls especially, aimed as it is at particular persons with particular spiritual and psychological problems, cannot do without some form of psychological expression. Listening, understanding and having compassion inevitably involve psychology. The giving of pastoral advice cannot be confined purely and simply to the preaching of the Word. It must be expressed with the particular needs and weaknesses of the individual in mind--that is to say, psychologically. On the other hand spiritual direction, as we shall see more clearly later, is of necessity based on the Bible; otherwise it ceases to be spiritual, to become merely an analysis followed by psychological advice. I am therefore led to the conclusion that the cure of souls and spiritual direction are identical, finding nothing in the history of pastoral theology that would justify any differentiation between them. If it is held that the only distinction is one of emphasis, and no claim is made for the "spiritual purity" of the cure of souls to the exclusion of spiritual direction, then I am willing to agree. In that case it is simply a matter of the definition of terms.<sup>1</sup>

Such an understanding of the pastor's work as confessor in spiritual direction removes the legalistic emphasis and permits the flexibility to deal with each confessant according to the particular situation. It is cast within the framework of the Church, yet is open to respect individual differences. With reference to absolution, such spiritual direction may take such a creative form as is suggested by Allan Knight Chalmers, who conducted an individualized service of purification to further the efficacy of the confession from one of his parishioners.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 69f.

<sup>2</sup>Allan Knight Chalmers, "Individualized Services of Purification," Pastoral Psychology, XI, No. 102 (March, 1960), 35-40.

confessant was a young girl, a "Prodigal Daughter" in her self-description, who had become pregnant. The pregnancy was voided through a fall, but she remained overwhelmed with feelings of guilt towards God, and was still captured by sensual fascination for the man involved. She came to the pastor, poured out her story, and waited for his "direction." "She was always hoping, she later confessed, that I would tell her what to do so that the issue might be settled by her refusing to obey."<sup>1</sup> But this pastor-confessor did not direct her (which is not to say that he did not "guide" her), but centered their relationship upon accepting her as a person of great worth in God's eyes, and trusting her to respond accordingly. Her relationships with her lover continued, not without set-backs, yet with growing confidence in herself, borne out of her pastor's mediation of God's trust and love for her. Yet, while she had confessed her sins, she could not definitely accept that her past was forgiven. Chalmers continues:

She wrote me once a many-paged account of her past, saying that if I "knew all" I would no longer believe in her. For that we held an individualized service of purification in the chapel. Before the altar I arranged a brass bowl and a kneeling stool. In the baptismal font, water was ready. On the altar, candles burned. I put on my robes to emphasize the sacramental in the service.

She was not to come forward unless she wanted to, but when she did, with Scripture and prayer the service was begun. As nearly as I can reproduce it, the prayer was as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

"O hungry heart, be still. Be still in God. Out of the depths I cried and He heard me. He heard me. Though I cry from the deepest hell, He hears my voice. Though I feared to look toward His holy temple again, felt myself shut out by the barriers of flesh, closed in the grave this earth had made about me, yet out of the pit Thou didst lift my life, O my God. In Thee have I put my trust--I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

"Thanks be to Thee, O God, thanks be to Thee, that nothing can forbid Thy love. Reject Thee we can often--do often. Betray Thee we can often--do often. Deny Thee we can often.

"But still with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed--majestic instancy, come on the following feet and a voice above their beat, 'Lo, naught contents thee, who contentst not Me.'

"O Lord our God, we deserve no other chance from standards of the world. The dingiest clot of earth unworthy of any love, we sometimes feel ourselves to be. Our lives entangled in the web of past mistakes; or held impotent in the inertia of our fears; or weak and worried by the limitations our flesh puts upon us. Then wonderfully, purifying comes Thy voice once more, unwearied, unworried, 'Rise, clasp My hand, and come.'

"We know not how it can be--but life depends upon the truth that it is so. De Profundis clamavi ad te, Domine. And He heard our cry."

Then with the words of the sixth chapter of Isaiah on my lips, I offered her a flame from off the altar, with which she ignited the first sheet of her confession, and dropped it into the bowl. One by one the other pages followed. They made a little crackling noise, a burst of flame, and all was still and dark again.

After a moment I took her hand and with it touched the bowl. It was cold and the story written on the now fragile pages was illegible.

I moved away to the baptismal font and waited. After a moment she came and knelt and the baptism of the new birth of the spirit was symbolized with cleansing water. . . .

We must see that there is a queer sort of unauthoritative inescapability about life which must be trusted without limit if it is ever to win any time.

In this single history of a crisis in one person's life is revealed the power both of the principle and the practice of freedom. We know that to an individual there does thus come the experience of becoming a new creature.

There has always been in the service of Baptism the recognition of a moment which divides a life. The scientist speaks of a time-arrow in experience. The aviator recognizes realistically a "point of no return." The individualized service of purification is a similar recognition of a past which is no longer a fact and a present which points toward a new and now attainable future.<sup>1</sup>

The service of purification which Chalmers describes above, if at all meaningfully perceived by the confessant, must have been a therapeutic experience. This therapeutic aspect is true for all aspects of theological confession to the degree that they result in the removing of the blockage which may be inhibiting the organism's innate drive towards wholeness. William James explains such confession in that

it is part of the general system of purgation and cleansing which one feels one's self in need of, in order to be in right relations to one's deity. For him who confesses, shams are over and realities have begun; he has exteriorized his rottenness. If he has not actually got rid of it, he at least no longer smears it over with a hypocritical show of virtue--he lives at least upon a basis of veracity.<sup>2</sup>

From the therapeutic standpoint it is precisely because the confessant has "exteriorized his rottenness" that he is enabled to move to a "basis of veracity." To put this in a different way, because the confessant has purged himself of what he could not accept, he is now freed to move in the direction of genuine self-acceptance. Yet

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 38-40.

<sup>2</sup>William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: The Modern Library, 1929), p. 452.



such self-acceptance does not mean that he purges himself in the sense of denying his past as if it never existed. Rather, the confessant's increased self-acceptance means that he is now able to accept those things about himself which were previously unacceptable. Hence, growth in self-acceptance has definite implications as concerns the efficacy of confession. However, in the actual experience of confession, genuine acceptance of one's sordid past is often very difficult. Robert E. Elliott illustrates this problem out of his own counseling experience:

A young married student made confession to me of an off-beat sexual adventure he had engaged in about a year before, an episode from which he had recoiled in shock and horror, and one which he saw to have been at the root of a series of almost disabling psychophysical disorders that came in the following months. He had been laboring at this in private prayer and confession, seeking desperately for what he called forgiveness. At times he felt that God had forgiven him, at other times he was again in the despair of feeling cut off from God's mercy by an unforgivable offense.

Remembering something about his family relationships, I asked him if he had ever been forgiven by his mother for anything. The question brought at first a kind of puzzled look and then the observation that apparently he had never needed to be forgiven by her because in her eyes he could never do anything wrong. He went on to observe that she could be very unforgiving of other people. One time she refused to talk to her best friend for two years because that friend was not at home one time the mother went to visit her.

In relation to his mother the boy has simply had no experience of a relationship broken and gathered up again in acceptance and forgiveness. His posture in relation to her has been one in which he does no wrong in her eyes, and in this context he has shaped a parallel self-image. On the one hand is the demand on himself to be perfect; on the other hand, a basketful of unassimilable experiences that contradict that image but that he has no way of gathering in. The sexual episode represents to him the most shocking and

disgusting of these, and his efforts to deal with it in prayer of penitence have basically been efforts to cast it out or to ask God to erase it. In his own words he has been seeking desperately to get back his innocence.

He has heard with his ears the good news of the gospel, but in his heart he is unable to accept God's accepting of him as one having committed such an act, and he is driven in torment to beseech God to erase this event from his past so that God will be able to accept him.<sup>1</sup>

The problem which Elliott's example points up is that of realizing self-acceptance as the result of experiencing acceptance from another. As concerns theological confession, the question has to do with experiencing acceptance from the object of confession, or God.<sup>2</sup> In this connection it may honestly be asked if the confessant can truly experience self-acceptance through confession if he feels that the God who is the object of his confession cannot first accept him. In other words, for genuine self-acceptance, the God to whom the confessant unburdens himself, seeking restoration and reconciliation in relationship, must Himself be recognized as an accepting God of love, rather than an accusing God of wrath.

The needful representation of God as accepting, rather than avenging, again underscores the responsibility of the pastoral-confessor in dealing with his confessant. The confessor will most beneficially (and efficaciously, as

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, op. cit., pp. 12f.

<sup>2</sup>Other implications in connection with God as the object of confession have been treated earlier, supra, pp. 224f.

concerns the confession) relate to his confessant in terms of what Martin Buber has called the "I-thou" relationship of respect for persons, in contrast to an "I-it" awareness of mere impersonal things.<sup>1</sup> Paul Johnson summarizes this distinction:

To every thing my reaction is impersonal and mechanical, interested merely in its utility for me in the suiting of my egocentric interests. The I-It relationship keeps the center of life in my ego and has only passing and instrumental concern for the things which I use. When another person is set off as He or She, bounded by space and assigned to a convenient niche in my scheme of things, he becomes It and I treat him like any other thing.

But when I discover a person as Thou, the center of life moves outward from my ego to meet him in a vital and interpersonal relationship. Thou is then seen as a person of infinitely potential worth, not to be used as a thing but to be appreciated and valued intrinsically as an irreplaceable and incomparable treasure. When Thou confronts my anxious ego, I may be disturbed by feelings of guilt and inferiority, not yet ready to accept what this means in open acknowledgment. But if I discover in Thou understanding, accepting, forgiving, and appreciative attitudes, our relationship re-creates my self in response to Thou. Mistakes will recur, and I will fail again and again to fulfill the highest possibilities of our relationship. Yet nothing else can so purge my guilt or waken new life in me as the faithful appreciation of Thou. We live, grow,<sup>2</sup> and find health of soul in such an I-Thou relationship.

The point is that as the confessor relates to his confessant as a Thou, this sense of Thou-ness will gradually become reciprocated, as the result of the confessant's increased self-acceptance. The way will then be opened to

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

<sup>2</sup>Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care, pp. 126f.

point to the supreme Thou, God, as He is experienced through the confessor's acceptance. It would be difficult to overestimate the therapeutic value in assessing the efficacy of such confession. But, it must be emphasized that such confessor-confessant unburdening is only psychological, and preparatory. As Eduard Thurneysen states, "It is never to be considered more than an auxiliary means apt to lead to confession proper, to confession before God."<sup>1</sup>

This "confession proper" is the theological dimension, where human acceptance gives way to divine forgiveness. Yet this divine forgiveness must itself be experienced by the confessant for the confession to be truly efficacious. The confessant must come to actually experience what James G. Emerson, Jr., has termed "realized forgiveness," by which is meant "the awareness of forgiveness to such a degree that a person is free from the guilt he feels."<sup>2</sup> This awareness marks the high point in the entire experience of confession. It does not deny the fact of guilt but realizes its healing by virtue of God's acceptance. To the degree that this divine forgiveness is truly realized and genuinely assimilated will the lonely and estranged confessant actually and completely be lifted out

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<sup>1</sup>Eduard Thurneysen, A Theology of Pastoral Care, trans. Jack A. Worthington and Thomas Wieser, et al. (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1962), p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>James G. Emerson, Jr., Divorce, the Church, and Remarriage (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 23.

of his anguished hell of egocentricity and into the forgiving and accepting arms of his loving God. And here is where the theological and psychological dimensions of man have one of their closest meetings. For the doctrine of forgiveness is theological, while the experience of feeling forgiven is psychological. The pronouncement of forgiveness comes from outside of man, as a free gift from God, yet it must be genuinely experienced by man himself, in order for his confession to be efficacious.

As suggestions for further research beyond this study, very helpful contributions could be made by specifically focusing upon the respective implications of Absolution and Satisfaction within the context of the Protestant understanding of the doctrine of forgiveness (and with special attention given to Bonhoeffer's concept of "cheap grace"<sup>1</sup>). Further, a very significant study could be made by considering Mowrer's concern with restitution and his "guilt theory" of anxiety,<sup>2</sup> in comparison with Freud's thought.

### Conclusions

1. The disciplines of Theology and Psychology are independent sciences, each making use of its own distinctive categories and frame of orientation. The two

<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 256f.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 262 (n. 1).

disciplines are both empirical, but are of different orders, with the result that they are not feature for feature comparable. Each science is valid in its own sphere of concern. Together the two disciplines are not contradictory, but, rather, serve to complement each other in the sense of more clearly verifying the richness of human experience.

2. The experience of confession is common to both Theology and Psychology, It is misleading to make a pointed differentiation when considering confession within the respective frames of reference, as there is considerable dynamic overlapping. However, when confession is experienced within a distinctly theological framework it is understood that, as Richard C. Cabot and Russell L. Dicks put it, "the two must face a Third."<sup>1</sup> The fact of God being the ultimate object of theological confession results in such confession being qualitatively different from psychological confession alone. The transcendent relationship experienced by man in relation to God makes it a distinctive category from the relationship between patient and therapist. Again, the two relationships are not contradictory. Instead they are of a different order, as man is finite, and humanly feels his relationship with God in a psychological sense, as well as being assured of his

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<sup>1</sup> Richard C. Cabot and Russell L. Dicks, The Art of Ministering to the Sick (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 173.

theological relationship as manifested through his participation in the Christian Church--the body of Christ.

3. Man's predicament in being finite is the experience of guilt. He feels lonely, estranged, and cut off from meaningful relationships. In the theological context he is separated from his mutually-binding covenant relationship with God due to sin, understood as consisting of that which separates, climaxed by the hell of egocentricity. Through confession of sin he seeks divine acceptance and reconciliation into relationship. Yet such confession is not a mere legalistic recital of transgressions, but the dynamic experience of the creature humbling his self-centered pride in focusing upon the Creator. The result of such humbling behavior, made possible by God's free gift of grace through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is divine forgiveness.

4. Man's predicament in being emotionally disturbed is also the experience of guilt. He again feels lonely, estranged, and cut off from meaningful relationships. In the psychological context he is separated from different dimensions of his own psychic apparatus. Through the process of therapy he is aided to uncover the repressions in the process of making conscious the unconscious. Through confession he is enabled to experience the catharsis which hopefully frees him from distortions of conscience, fears, and anxieties, and so moves towards increased

self-acceptance. However, the focus of psychological confession is essentially patient-centered, rather than God-centered, with the result that the individual in treatment reaches the end of therapy to find himself rather more freed to himself deal creatively with his earthly problems than accepted, restored, and reconciled in the divine relationship between his immortal soul and the God of the universe. This is not to suggest that psychological confession is, in the long run, less helpful than theological confession, as the psychic pains which cause man's misery commonly involve feelings of guilt towards God which in themselves are causing his separation in relation to God. Again, psychological confession is of a different order than divine unburdening, so may actually serve as a preparation for theological confession.

5. In the frameworks of both Theology and Psychology the experience of confession is difficult. It is hard to remove the false fronts of ego pride and admit to consciousness the self that really is. Accordingly, confession is actually efficacious in the sense of being therapeutic only when its dynamics reveal man's basic attitudes and uncover his deepest motives, so as to free man from inner conflict. It is efficacious in the sense of being redemptive only when man acknowledges his sin as resulting from his personal responsibility and can truly realize God's forgiveness by virtue of accepting the fact



that he has truly been accepted by God into divine relationship even though humanly unacceptable.

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